

## Countdown to 2015: Improving Access and Openness to Help Achieve the Millennium Development Goals

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Access is an essential component of “openness,” enabling open trade, interaction and exchange among people, businesses, and nations. For more than 35 years, FedEx Corporation has been actively involved in extending the world’s access—enabling people and communities everywhere to connect with the physical goods, services, markets, information, and ideas they need to improve their quality of life. As part of our commitment to access, we have actively contributed to the development of the Enabling Trade Index (ETI) discussed in this *Report*, which examines the factors, policies, and services facilitating the free flow of goods over national borders and to destinations. The ETI ranks nations and economies according to how well they facilitate global trade through their market access, border administration, business environment, and transport and communications infrastructures.

We are particularly supportive of this endeavor because, in many ways, the ETI builds on an earlier study published by FedEx—the Access Index, which aimed to quantify the concept of access and identify its benefits.<sup>1</sup> Some of the indicators explored in the Access Index and the related Access Opportunities Index overlap with those examined in the ETI, especially those pertaining to transport and communications infrastructure. However, the ETI introduces additional concepts and indicators not previously explored, such as the burden of customs procedures, quality of customs services, foreign ownership restrictions, ease of hiring foreign labor, non-tariff barriers, and openness to multilateral trade rules. The ETI also has broader country coverage, and provides more specific guidance for policymakers in the areas of trade and transportation than earlier studies on international competitiveness and development.

In the context of key findings from these indexes, this paper explores the essential role of access and enabling trade in creating and expanding opportunities to improve social and economic conditions around the world, especially as they relate to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The United Nations (UN) formulated the MDGs in 2000, with a target date for achieving them by 2015. Specific goals include eradicating poverty and hunger, promoting gender equality and empowering women, achieving universal education, and ensuring environmental sustainability.

Access, in helping nations to achieve progress toward the MDGs, improves quality of life.

### What is access and why is enabling trade important?

In simplest terms, Access is a force that operates on three variables: time, space and information. We gain Access when we reduce the time and space between us and the things we seek—people, places, goods, capital, opportunities and much more—while increasing the amount of information available about these things.<sup>2</sup>

Access is the means of interaction and exchange among people, businesses, and nations. The more it grows, the more our universe of possibilities expands. Access is essential to openness—it facilitates open borders, open trade, and wide-open opportunities for individuals, businesses, and nations.

When governments reduce barriers to trade, they provide businesses with access to global markets. With this access, businesses are given opportunities to expand and contribute to economic growth, which, in turn, can contribute to eradicating poverty and improving living standards. Additional access to global markets through networks such as the Internet allows entrepreneurs to start businesses out of their homes and market their products throughout the world. The reduced importance of location can empower women, who often find it harder than men to relocate, and can help to promote gender equality.

### Access can be measured

Although it drives economic growth and improves human welfare around the world, the concept of access has always been somewhat elusive—it is easy to identify, but difficult to quantify and measure. The Access Index measures a country's potential to obtain physical goods and information:

- **Physical access** dramatically reduces the economic constraint of geographic distance. It allows entirely new patterns of production, consumption, and economic development. The indicators representing physical access explore measures of trade, such as export permits and hidden import barriers, as well as transport, such as percent of total roads paved, port infrastructure, air transport infrastructure, and railroad infrastructure.
- **Information access** reduces uncertainty, enables more timely decision-making, and spurs innovation for continuous improvement. The indicators representing information access explore telecommunications measures, such as telephone lines, mobile telephone subscribers, personal computers and Internet users per 100 inhabitants, telephone costs, telephone infrastructure quality, and speed and cost of Internet access.

The table in the appendix shows the ranks and scores of the 75 countries covered in the Access Index.

### Access is a competitive advantage

Topping both the ETI and the Access Index is Hong Kong. Technology writer Ilan Greenberg, who con-

tributes to *The New York Times* and other publications, sums up why Hong Kong tops the list:

Hong Kong is a dynamic magnet for striving immigrants from the [Chinese] Mainland and the world. The city is a bustling meritocracy, and its deep investments in digital infrastructure and business links to the larger world have combined to create the most access-friendly major city on the globe. The city is so successful—and so important to China's economic vitality—that the Chinese government agreed to maintain Hong Kong's open traditions for 50 years after the British handover, preserving an experiment in entrepreneurialism, freedom and self-reliance that's unlike any of China's other autonomous regions.<sup>3</sup>

Because it relies heavily on trade for its economic success, it is no surprise that Hong Kong appears at the top of the indexes. While it has made deep investments in transport, digital, and other infrastructures that facilitate access, it has, perhaps even more importantly, also created and maintained a regulatory environment that ensures openness to trade, investment, and information flows.

The case of Hong Kong demonstrates that enabling access to information and investment flows and ensuring a physical and economic structure that enables trade can help level the playing field for economies that have small internal markets and limited domestic resources. The top four economies in both the Access Index and the ETI rankings—Hong Kong, Singapore, the Netherlands, and Switzerland—all have small domestic markets. These economies rely heavily on trade for economic survival, as evidenced by the data on trade as a percentage of GDP, shown in Table 1 for the top four economies in the Access Index.<sup>4</sup>

**Table 1: Access and the Economy**

Country/Economy	Rank	Access Index score	Trade as % of GDP	GDP (US\$ millions)	Population (millions)
Hong Kong SAR	1	91.1	293.3	159,943	6.79
Singapore	2	89.1	341.4	88,275	4.16
Denmark	3	85.3	83.0	172,357	5.37
Switzerland	4	84.2	81.0	274,469	7.29

### Where has access made a difference?

An analysis of the economic experience of various countries highlights the clear association between openness and prosperity, per capita growth, and development, as measured by the UN Human Development Index.

## Openness enabling economic growth and improving human welfare

In the following section we discuss the experiences of two countries, Chile and Estonia, which made openness to trade and access to information and investment flows key pillars of their economic strategy. Improvements to the business environment accompanied these changes.

### Chile

The case of Chile, the highest-ranking Latin American country in both the Access Index and the ETI, shows how an economic policy based on the principle of openness and access has resulted in sustained growth and a reduction of poverty. Chile demonstrated its commitment to enabling trade by introducing a uniform tariff and implementing a total ban of non-tariff barriers, which limited the scope for lobbying by vested interests in the process of setting tariffs. In addition, since the beginning of its liberalization process in the early 1990s, Chile has reduced tariffs progressively and has pursued free trade agreements with its key trading partners, including Free Trade Treaties (FTT) with the European Union in 2002 and the United States in 2004. Chile has also adopted a number of bilateral agreements with Latin American countries, trading blocs such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Area (APEC), and countries as diverse as Korea, Singapore, and Brunei. The outcome of this policy is that Chile has considerably lowered tariff rates and gained preferential access to markets that account for more than half of the world's GDP.

The Chilean economy has benefited from access to these markets. From 2003 through 2007, annual growth ranged between 4 and 6 percent, for a five-year total of nearly 25 percent.<sup>5</sup> Trade significantly contributed to that growth, particularly through solid export earnings in forestry, fishing, and mining.<sup>6</sup> From 2002 to 2006, the country's exports more than tripled.<sup>7</sup> Chile's economy is the most competitive in Latin America: according to the World Economic Forum's *Global Competitiveness Report 2007–2008*, Chile ranks 26th worldwide in terms of competitiveness, well ahead of the next-ranked country from the region, Mexico, at 52nd place.<sup>8</sup>

Chile's economic success has meant real gains for its citizens, as per capita income more than doubled between 1990 and 2005.<sup>9</sup> The rise in per capita income led to widespread support among citizens and political groups for increased social spending, with much of it aimed at the poorest of the poor. Chile's economic success, coupled with generously funded social and structural reforms, has enabled it to become the first country in Latin America to achieve a 50 percent reduction in extreme poverty, a milestone in implementing the first of the MDGs.<sup>10</sup> Between 1990 and 2006, Chile reduced poverty from 38.6 percent to 13.7 percent and extreme poverty from 12.9 percent to 3.2 percent.<sup>11</sup>

Toward achieving the health-related MDGs, Chile has implemented its *Universal Access Plan for Comprehensive Services and Explicit Guarantees (AUGE)*. The AUGE provides access to a complete health system for all Chileans through a human rights-based social guarantee. The social guarantee incorporates and defines the principles of access, quality, opportunity, and financial protection. The AUGE has supported initiatives that have given Chile a strong start toward achieving the MDGs of reducing child mortality and improving maternal health.

Chile's success toward achieving the MDGs attests to the power of the access cycle: access enables business expansion and economic growth, which, in turn, improve human welfare. Improved human welfare leads to higher levels of personal satisfaction and fulfillment, which, in turn, lead to greater expectations for access.

### Estonia

One need look no further than Estonia, ranked first—in both the Access Index and the ETI—among the 12 countries that have joined the European Union (EU) since 2004, to see how access to information and global trade and investment flows through technology, transportation, and other essential infrastructures can benefit an economy. Estonia, which regained independence only less than two decades ago and has a population of just 1.3 million, is one of the most Internet-savvy countries in the world. After Estonia became independent from the former Soviet Union in 1991, the government committed to developing the country's technical infrastructure, installing Internet access points in the countryside and putting computers in every school. As a result, Estonia has one of the highest concentrations of wireless Internet access points in the world and more Internet users per capita than most nations in Western Europe.<sup>12</sup> According to *New York Times* reporter Robert Levine,

The [Estonian] government enshrined Internet access as a human right in the new constitution and now conducts almost all of its business online. Estonia became a country of early adopters, where online banking took off and drivers can pay for parking with virtual cash from their mobile phones.<sup>13</sup>

The investment in Internet access was just one of a series of commitments the Estonian government made to openness, including open trade, an open culture, and an open economy. Estonia drastically reduced trade tariffs and non-tariff barriers and abolished all export restrictions, making the nation a free-trade zone. It passed a law on the sale of land to ensure the property rights of all foreign investors. It also abolished special privileges for a few foreign investors, thereby attracting a broader range of companies. While courting foreign investment, Estonia promoted a more entrepreneurial

domestic society by reforming the business environment, ensuring freedom of the press, privatizing many of its government-owned industries, and transforming government-sponsored trade unions into free trade unions.

Former Estonian Prime Minister Mart Laar, who led the country during its critical years of reform, can personally attest to the value of openness in trade:

Openness provides many advantages for a smooth and rapid transition to a market economy. It provides a rational set of market-determined processes for resource allocation, introduces more competition, allows countries to specialize according to their comparative advantages, and lets the market rather than the government pick the winners. A policy of openness also establishes an environment of transparency, with clear market-based signals for producers.<sup>14</sup>

Opening Estonia to foreign investment “created new working places, reconstructed old factories, brought new knowledge and technology, and made Estonia more modern and competitive.”<sup>15</sup> Foreign investment spurred domestic entrepreneurialism and gave citizens the confidence to pursue “nearshoring” opportunities in software engineering, for example, with companies in neighboring Finland.

Largely as a result of its reforms in favor of openness and access, Estonia has experienced the fastest economic growth in Europe during the past few years. Since the start of its reforms, Estonia’s economic growth has averaged 6 percent per year, and in 2005 it was nearly 11 percent.<sup>16</sup> Today, Estonia’s economy is among the freest in the world, ranking 12th in the *2008 Index of Economic Freedom*.<sup>17</sup> Its economic success has afforded its citizens a much improved quality of life, and demonstrates to developing nations what may be achieved through openness and access in terms of achieving progress toward the MDGs:

Poverty and inequality are decreasing in Estonia. According to the United Nations Human Development Index, Estonia has moved from the group of not-so-developed countries to the group of developed countries. Estonia has low unemployment and low inflation, and living standards are improving rapidly. The budget is not only balanced, but also running a strong surplus. Estonia has passed several social reforms, such as health care and pension reform, and has become a full member of both NATO and the European Union. By nearly any standard, Estonia is the most competitive economy among new EU member states. Only 10 years ago, Estonia clearly lagged behind most Central and Eastern European countries, but it has since passed them and is fast approaching the living standards of Old Europe.<sup>18</sup>

### Respecting individuals, environment, and society

Economic growth, if poorly managed, can damage the environment and social fabrics. However, economic growth can also serve as a catalyst for effective environmental stewardship and social development. Improved infrastructure and efficient operations bring reductions in pollution and enhance safety. Innovative technologies, paired with efficient operations, help to ensure *sustainable* growth. Openness gives people choice and opportunity.

### Protecting the environment

As an example of a private-sector solution for environmentally friendly growth, FedEx worked with Environmental Defense to pioneer commercial hybrid vehicles. The first FedEx hybrid-electric trucks entered the roadways in 2004. The new vehicles provide 42 percent better fuel economy than conventional diesel vehicles and emit 30 percent fewer greenhouse gases. FedEx is expanding its hybrid program across the globe. To create demand for alternative energy vehicles, FedEx also provided the leadership to call for US government regulations that set efficiency standards for commercial trucks.

### Fueling entrepreneurship and empowering individuals

The key to changing the lives of the world’s poor is to develop new distribution channels that provide a sustainable structure . . . engaging the poor as active consumers rather than passive recipients of charity.<sup>19</sup>

Access is the key to developing successful entrepreneurs from “passive recipients of charity.” With access to technology, information, and markets, as well as access to microfinance, the poor have the capacity to improve their own situations. Access can fuel entrepreneurship provided that entrepreneurs have the capacities to take advantage of access. Needless to say, access will be valuable only for healthy and empowered individuals. The Junior Achievement Company Program, sponsored by Junior Achievement Worldwide, serves as a model for ways that developing nations may successfully promote entrepreneurship; FedEx Corporation supports and works with this organization.<sup>20</sup>

The Junior Achievement Company Program develops entrepreneurial talent among high school students by having them organize and operate a business enterprise from start to finish: the students learn to conceptualize, design, and produce a new product or service. They learn the process of capitalizing a business by selling stock in their companies. The students elect officers; negotiate wholesale and retail prices; calculate break-even points; prepare budgets; and pay wages, salaries, and commissions. They also conduct market research, create advertising, and sell products. At the end of the program, students liquidate their company, prepare a profit and loss statement and balance sheet, and report their

success, or lessons learned, to their shareholders. In 2006, an estimated 242,163 student companies were developed in 67 countries around the world. Overall, Junior Achievement Worldwide implements programs in nearly 100 countries and reaches more than seven million students each year.

International programs and initiatives are not the only solution. The story of Maria Estela Gimenez Vazquez described in Box 1 demonstrates the potential of access to facilitate a “personal revolution” and help developing countries such as Paraguay achieve progress in MDGs aimed at empowering women and eradicating poverty.

### What can developing nations do to increase openness and access?

Economic growth is the best solution for achieving the MDGs. It enables nations to reduce poverty by providing individuals with opportunities to build better lives for themselves. Economic growth also provides essential funding to address goals for improved maternal health, reduced child mortality, decreased incidence of infectious diseases, and improved environmental sustainability. In addition, economic growth enables individuals and governments greater autonomy in determining the priorities among these goals.

### Embrace the essentials of openness

By embracing openness and access, nations pave the way to achieving higher economic growth. First among the essentials is creating a regulatory environment that is conducive to trade, foreign investment, and entrepreneurial activity. Mart Laar, prime minister of Estonia during its years of economic reform, understood the primary need to eliminate obstacles to economic growth. Among its reforms, his administration reduced trade tariffs and non-tariff barriers, abolished export restrictions, ensured the property rights of foreign investors, decreased business taxes, and privatized state-owned businesses. Through these and other reforms, Laar’s administration made it easier and more attractive for foreign investors to set up shop in Estonia and for Estonian entrepreneurs to develop new business enterprises.

He understood that foreign investment can help a developing nation create the infrastructures and services that enable greater access and openness, including telecommunications, Internet services, transportation systems and financial services. These infrastructures and services form the backbone of an economy and provide the means for continued growth by freeing individuals to pursue economic activities.

### It is not just up to governments—the private sector can help too

Although an effective regulatory framework is essential, responsibility for economic development does not rest

### Box 1: How access can facilitate a personal revolution

Vazquez was born in Villarrica, Paraguay, into a very poor family, living on less than US\$1 per day. She wanted to study clothing manufacturing to achieve a better standard of living, and worked as a maid until she saved enough money to attend a program in Brazil.

After returning to her native Paraguay, she received microfinancing from a local cooperative that offers small loans at reasonable interest rates. The funding enabled her to slowly expand her business. However, her growth potential is limited by Paraguay’s lack of access to a safe and reliable transportation infrastructure. She says:

*I can’t export my clothes outside Paraguay because the infrastructure is poor, and I rarely even sell outside my neighborhood because it is difficult for a woman to travel alone.<sup>1</sup>*

Imagine the degree of success an entrepreneur like Vazquez could achieve if she had access to external markets through the Internet, lower import and export costs, and reliable methods of distribution, including an improved transportation infrastructure of paved roads, ports, and airports.

#### Note

<sup>1</sup> *Access Review* 2007.

entirely on the shoulders of governments. The private sector can provide solutions as well. As a global service provider in transport and logistics, with physical and digital networks that span the world, FedEx is committed to enhancing access; it enables economic growth, which improves quality of life.

Private-sector efforts to ensure sustainability are crucial to its success, a position that FedEx has embraced, as shown by the environmental and youth programs described above. Some of the other issues that can be tackled by the private sector are described below, with examples of FedEx programs that address these issues.

### Improving access for small businesses

To make it easier for entrepreneurs and small businesses to access the global market, FedEx has developed a portfolio of personalized services, tools, and discounts. For example, the FedEx PyMex Membership Program supports small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Latin America and the Caribbean with strategic advice and tools to make international shipping easy. The program provides educational seminars on all aspects of exporting, including marketing support, packaging

design, and information about customs regulations. By helping SMEs compete globally, FedEx can help them contribute to their country's economic growth.

Since its introduction in Mexico in 2004, the FedEx PyMex Membership program has worked with more than 11,000 SMEs throughout Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, and Puerto Rico. It has conducted more than 400 export seminars in collaboration with public- and private-sector organizations.

### Assisting governments

The private sector can also work with governments to increase access. For example, FedEx works with governments in Latin American and the Caribbean to reduce and simplify customs and trade regulations, thereby helping SMEs tap new markets, grow their businesses, and play a larger role in interregional and intercontinental trade.

As a global citizen, FedEx is committed to connecting the world in responsible and resourceful ways.

### Notes

- 1 The Access Index™ was commissioned by FedEx and developed by SRI International, an independent, nonprofit research institute. The index quantifies the concept of access and identifies its benefits. The Access Index ranks 75 countries according to their access to goods, services and information. An additional *Access Opportunities Index™* is composed of a series of three studies that measure the aggregate opportunities access provides to nations, businesses, and individuals throughout the world. The three opportunity indexes gauge the extent to which each of these groups is able to use access to improve its current condition and future prospects.
- 2 See Lindsay 2007, p. 25.
- 3 See Greenberg 2007, p. 36.
- 4 See SRI International 2006, p. 13.
- 5 See Velasco 2008, slide 15.
- 6 See CIA 2007, Chile, "Economy."
- 7 See International Trade Centre, [www.intracen.org](http://www.intracen.org).
- 8 World Economic Forum 2007.
- 9 See MDG Monitor 2007b.
- 10 See MDG Monitor 2007b.
- 11 See MDG Monitor 2007b.
- 12 See Levine 2007, p. 55.
- 13 See Levine 2007, p. 56.
- 14 See Laar 2007, p. 5–6.
- 15 See Laar 2007, p. 6.
- 16 See Laar 2007, p. 11.
- 17 See The Heritage Foundation 2008.
- 18 See Laar 2007, p. 11.
- 19 See Novogratz 2007, p. 19.

- 20 A second program supported by FedEx is the Healthy Women, Healthy Economies program, sponsored by the Global Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. This program combats HIV/AIDS through a three-pronged approach of health services, education, and microfinance to support the economic empowerment of women and girls. The program operates under the premise that women and girls who are economically empowered, better educated, and have access to health care have opportunities to negotiate their relationships and advocate for themselves, making them less vulnerable to HIV/AIDS.

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## Appendix A: Access Index Country/Economy Rankings and Scores

Country/Economy	Rank	Score	Country/Economy	Rank	Score
Hong Kong SAR	1	91.1	Bulgaria	51	37.6
Singapore	2	89.1	China	52	37.6
Denmark	3	85.3	Ukraine	53	37.2
Switzerland	4	84.2	Romania	54	37.2
Netherlands	5	83.1	Trinidad and Tobago	55	36.0
Finland	6	82.6	Sri Lanka	56	35.9
Germany	7	82.1	Costa Rica	57	35.7
Sweden	8	81.9	Egypt	58	35.7
United Kingdom	9	80.5	India	59	34.9
France	10	79.0	Indonesia	60	33.7
Belgium	11	74.9	Colombia	61	32.7
United States	12	74.8	Venezuela	62	31.3
Canada	13	74.6	Dominican Republic	63	31.1
Austria	14	74.3	Peru	64	31.1
Norway	15	74.0	Philippines	65	27.4
New Zealand	16	73.7	Bolivia	66	26.3
Iceland	17	72.4	Zimbabwe	67	23.5
Australia	18	69.8	Paraguay	68	23.2
Japan	19	69.7	Honduras	69	23.2
Israel	20	69.1	Guatemala	70	21.5
Taiwan, China	21	68.3	Ecuador	71	20.8
Korea, Rep.	22	66.9	Nicaragua	72	18.5
Ireland	23	64.7	Vietnam	73	18.3
Portugal	24	64.5	Nigeria	74	17.3
Spain	25	64.0	Bangladesh	75	14.4
Estonia	26	63.0			
Greece	27	62.9			
Italy	28	61.9			
Slovak Republic	29	60.3			
Czech Republic	30	59.9			
Slovenia	31	59.8			
Chile	32	57.4			
Malaysia	33	55.3			
Latvia	34	51.2			
Lithuania	35	50.9			
Hungary	36	45.8			
Thailand	37	44.4			
South Africa	38	44.3			
Turkey	39	43.4			
Poland	40	41.8			
Mauritius	41	41.5			
Uruguay	42	41.4			
Argentina	43	41.0			
Jordan	44	40.4			
Mexico	45	40.4			
Russian Federation	46	40.3			
Brazil	47	39.9			
El Salvador	48	39.3			
Jamaica	49	38.5			
Panama	50	37.8			