UNCTAD Technology Assessment Project

Concept Note for

Training Workshop on TA Project Steering Committee and Expert Group

Thursday, 4 March 2022, 10:00-14:15 (CET, GMT+2 hour)

Background

Technology Assessment (TA) is an inter-disciplinary process for assessing the potential impacts of adopting a technology that is used to inform policymakers, raise public awareness, and inform the design of policy and legal environments in order to harness the full potential of the technology and address possible negative effects. Although TA systems have become well established in several developed countries, the use of TA in the developing world lags behind. Therefore, in light of the challenges posed by today's fast-moving technological change, it is of paramount importance for developing countries to develop their capacity to undertake TA. TA capacity building is part of broader STI capacity building activities. The TA project aims to build TA capacity in the three beneficiary countries to undertake a pilot TA exercise on one or more technologies used in agriculture and/or energy based broadly on the UNCTAD TA methodology.

The UNCTAD methodology for TA divides the TA process into seven steps:

1. Governance and steering;
2. Priority setting;
3. Framing project questions;
4. Setting project goals;
5. Project implementation;
6. Quality control; and
7. Reporting.

The first step, namely governance and steering, entails the definition and creation of a sound and inclusive governance structure to organise and implement an effective TA exercise. The TA literature has shown that pluralism is a fundamental element of TA, and a wholesome adoption of technology requires democratic and participatory processes. Therefore, it is critical to involve both experts from relevant technology fields and stakeholders who represent different societal groups that may be affected by adopting the technology. This implies adequate representation of different genders, as well as relevant age groups and ethnicities so as to follow principles of equity and inclusivity. This approach offers the advantages of accessing dispersed knowledge, developing socially sustainable solutions and strengthening social inclusiveness and democratic processes.

The topics covered are related to the establishment of a Steering Committee (SC) and an Expert Group (EG) for an assessment of one or more technologies used in energy and/or agriculture. The training will follow UNCTAD's Methodology for Technology Assessment in combination with case studies. The participants will obtain knowledge of the methodological and operational elements of establishing a solid TA governance structure.

Objectives

This training will be delivered for relevant stakeholders in the Seychelles, South Africa, and Zambia. It is being organized to prepare for their participation in the project and build capacity in these countries to establish governance mechanisms for the TA process. It has four main objectives:

1. Complete step 1.6 of the TA roadmap;
2. Enable participants to better understand the first key step of a technology assessment exercise;
3. Facilitate the selection of members for both the SC and EG, and familiarise potential or selected members of SCs and EGs with practical case studies on the operationalisation of both the SC and EG.
4. Discuss specific issues in and queries from each of the three pilot countries.

Participation

The training will take place on the 4th of August 2022 from 10:00 to 14:15 (with a 30-minute lunch break) using Central European Time (CET) (Greenwich Mean Time +1 hour), and it will be delivered virtually as a Zoom workshop. The training is targeted at TA project counterparts in the three countries and members or potential members of each beneficiary country's SCs and EGs. Decision makers of relevant agencies in the beneficiary countries are also encouraged to participate.

The topics covered will include:

1. Step-by-step overview of a TA;
2. Governance and steering of the TA process;
3. Internal Structures of the Steering Committee;
4. The Expert Group advising the Steering Committee;
5. Knowledge required in TA;
6. Stakeholders and public participation in TA;
7. Case studies of previous TA exercises;
8. Specific issues in beneficiary countries or queries from stakeholders regarding SCs and EGs.