



# INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF THE MDG-ORIENTED TRADE POLICY PROJECT

## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

### Project purpose

This project aimed at understanding and responding to the complex linkages between MDGs, trade, productive capacity and employment. In that sense, the objective of the project was to formulate and implement MDG-oriented trade policies that contributed to accelerating achievement of MDGs given the context of multiple and interrelated development challenges, while promoting capacity-building.

### Main project activities



<sup>a</sup> These activities were provided not only to the countries targeted for this project

### Evaluation methodology

The evaluator advanced a mixed methods approach, which included the desk review of key project documents, 19 telephone/skype interviews with project manager, project coordinator, other UNCTAD staff and consultants, and stakeholders. The interviews covered Panama, Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, Algeria, Tunisia, Namibia, Botswana and Zambia. An online survey, translated into French and Spanish, was sent to 57 beneficiaries of the project and other stakeholders. The survey response rate 52 percent.

## RESULTS

The evaluation concluded that the project was highly relevant and the project team took appropriate steps to adapt the project design during the lifespan of the project to match changing global trade and development contexts. The evaluator categorized the project as a very effective initiative with a reach that extended to more than nine developing countries.

**Relevance:** The evaluator found the project highly relevant regarding the needs of the target countries. The project team incorporated adjustments that in the evaluator's view were appropriate, timely and conducive to achieving progress on expected accomplishments. Project activities showed a clear relationship between the objective and expected accomplishments. However, the intervention logic could have been better attuned to capacity development.

UNCTAD's expertise in the trade and development area and the agency's track record of readily collaborating with partners interested in trade policy were recognized, during the interviews, by developing countries that do not have the necessary capacity to handle trade policy formulation and to prepare for trading agreements negotiations.

**Effectiveness:** Some of the project's activities exceeded expectations in terms of geographical coverage and by supplying more assistance over longer time periods than those stated initially.

Participant feedback confirmed high satisfaction (between good and excellent), for the Trade Policy Frameworks (TPFs), the inter-regional workshops, and the national workshops. Some skepticism was also conveyed that trade ministry staff were better-equipped post-intervention.

## QUICK FACTS

**PROJECT TITLE:**  
Capacity-building for the formulation and implementation of MDG-oriented trade policies in developing countries contributing to accelerating achievement of MDGs in the context of multiple and interrelated development challenges 1213K

**COUNTRIES:**  
Panama, Jamaica, Dominican Republic, Bhutan, Algeria, Tunisia, Angola, Namibia, Botswana, and Zambia

**REGIONS:**  
North and Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, Central America and the Caribbean

**EVALUATION TEAM:**  
Mr. Paul Cox (independent evaluator)

**PROJECT DURATION:**  
December 2012-November 2016

**DIVISION:**  
DITC

**PROGRAMME MANAGER:**  
Ms. Mina Mashayekhi

**PROJECT COORDINATOR:**  
Mr. Taisuke Ito

**BUDGET:**  
\$694,000

**DONORS:**  
UN Development Account

**IMPLEMENTING AGENCY:**  
UNCTAD

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## Trade Policy and Sustainable Development Meeting



06 - 08 October 2015. Palais des Nations. Geneva, Switzerland

**Efficiency:** The evaluation concluded that despite rising costs the project was delivered on time and within budget remained unchanged during the four-year implementation period. The project team was successful in utilizing resources from in-house and external partners, and it benefited from some flexibility in the use of allocated funding between spending envelopes. Overall project implementation rate 94 percent.

**Sustainability:** Indications are available that recommendations from completed TPFs are in the process of being incorporated into trade regimes in four target countries; furthermore, UNCTAD has already received ten requests for follow-up assistance.

Interviewees generally indicated satisfaction with the level of national 'ownership' over the work accomplished by the Project and confidence that some TPF recommendations would be implemented in their country's trade regime.

**Gender equality and Human Rights:** While neither gender equality nor human rights were identified as a project objective or addressed by any specific activities, the project team took into account female representation in the selection of beneficiaries. Human rights was not mentioned in the project design, however consideration of equity issues facing vulnerable populations were clearly evident in the TPFs documents of Botswana, Zambia, Angola, Panama, Jamaica and the Dominican Republic.

**Partnerships and Synergies:** The evaluator considered that national and inter-regional workshops were best examples of strengthened partnerships and synergies since those provided dialogues between the public and private sectors. The project also was an opportunity for the building of relationships between officials in different ministries and with regional entities.

## Key recommendations

Based on the findings, the evaluators proposed the following recommendations for UNCTAD:

- 1) Allocate more resources to background scoping work in a target country when designing new projects.
- 2) Develop project results framework to accompany the project design document in line with UN standards and practices.
- 3) Ensure adequate resources to properly conduct monitoring and evaluation, instead of a heavy reliance on a final project evaluation.
- 4) Commission a post-project evaluation to determine the impacts and contribution to the attainment of MDGs/SDGs.
- 5) Develop communication strategy at project design stage that is aligned to project objective and supportive of wider needs.
- 6) Improve communication to national consultants to ensure their full understanding of agency-wide expectations and cross-cutting issues.
- 7) Consider a comprehensive approach for a follow-up project of a similar nature in developing countries.



### Evaluation and Monitoring Unit (EMU)

United Nations Conference and Trade and Development  
(UNCTAD)

Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva, Switzerland

E-mail: [evaluation@unctad.org](mailto:evaluation@unctad.org)

Website: [Evaluation at UNCTAD](http://Evaluation at UNCTAD)