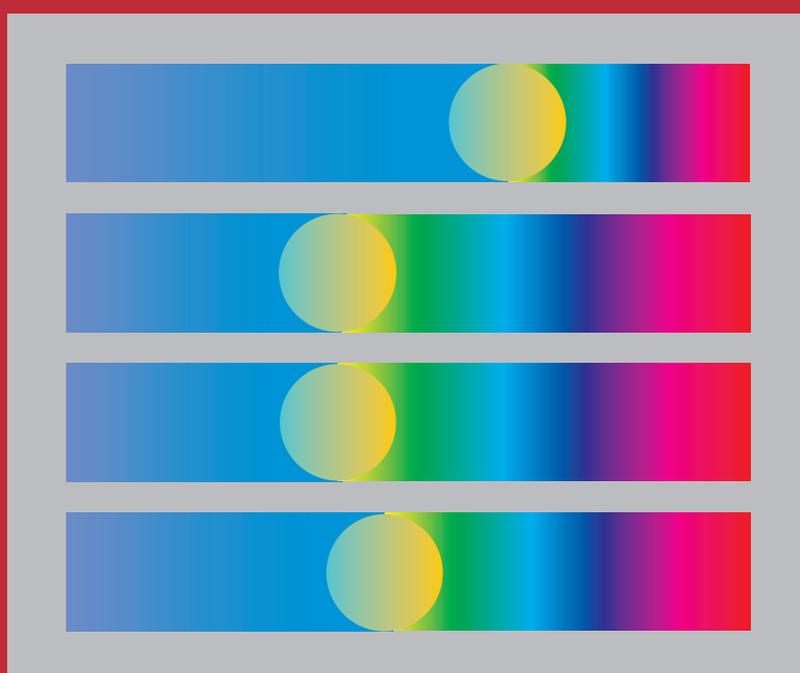


UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

FINAL IN-DEPTH EVALUATION REPORT

September 2000 - July 2005

UNCTAD work programme on
capacity building in developing countries
on issues in international investment agreements



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UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

**UNCTAD WORK PROGRAMME ON
CAPACITY BUILDING IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES ON ISSUES IN
INTERNATIONAL INVESTMENT AGREEMENTS**

TRUST FUND PROJECT INT/OT/OBG

**Final in-depth
EVALUATION REPORT**

September 2000 – July 2005

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Trust fund project on “Capacity-building in developing countries on issues in international investment agreements”

In-depth impact evaluation

I. Introduction

The project "Capacity Building in Developing Countries on issues relating to International Investment Agreements" has been executed by UNCTAD since November 2000 with a duration span of five years. The aim of the project was to help developing countries and economies in transition to participate as effectively as possible in discussions on, and negotiations of international investment agreements, through training and technical assistance (annex 1).

The project document was amended in December 2001 to reflect the Declaration of the Fourth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Doha in November 2001. The new trust fund project document realigned the activities undertaken, shifting the emphasis away from civil society engagement towards supporting the intergovernmental awareness- and consensus-building processes in Geneva and in the regions, while still stressing the primacy of training and capacity-building (annex 2). This amendment was agreed to by all donors to the original trust fund and therefore forms the basis for the final in-depth evaluation.¹

The original trust fund project document provided for an independent evaluation to be implemented through UNCTAD's Programme Planning and Assessment Unit (PPAU). This evaluation was to encompass a mid-term evaluation of the projects' output quality and efficiency and an in-depth final evaluation that was to concentrate on the project's impact in terms of achieving its set-out objectives (annex 1).² The mid-term evaluation took place from September to December 2002 (available at the UNCTAD web-site).³

With regard to the in-depth evaluation, the trust fund project document specified that the "evaluation will measure the impact of this project through various qualitative and quantitative benchmarks" and "assess both directly and indirectly the capacity built among policy-makers and negotiators from developing countries and economies in transition to participate as effectively as possible in discussions and negotiations of IIAs, as well as the degree to which this enhanced capacity has had (or is having) an impact".

The present report provides for this impact evaluation. After setting out the evaluation's methodology and the activities undertaken in its pursuit, the report presents the findings of the assessments of the projects impact in connection with the developed evaluation indicators and the original logical framework for the project. These findings are then brought to bear on the overall impact assessment in comparison with similar programmes aimed at capacity-building of like services providers. The report concludes with an overall assessment of the programmes' impact and recommendations in terms of lessons learned and possible follow-up actions, as they emanated from this evaluation.

¹ France, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom indicated their agreement to the changes in the trust fund document in writing. The Netherlands opted for closing its past contribution with a separate final report on the use of its funds and considered its new contributions to this activity as a new undertaking.

² "[...] (ii) an in-depth final evaluation that will take place in year four of the project and last until its conclusion. The focus of this in-depth evaluation will be on the results and impact of the programme assessed against the indicative benchmarks below, as well as those redefined taking into account the findings of the mid-term evaluation and the experience gained over the course of the project. The in-depth evaluation, which will use a participatory approach, will be undertaken by an evaluation team composed of a professional evaluator (preferably the consultant who undertook the mid-term evaluation) and two additional experts from Geneva-based delegations familiar with UNCTAD's work in this area that will also provide the perspective of both donors and beneficiary countries." (UNCTAD/ITE/IIT/DOC/2000/1/Rev.4 paragraph 16)

³ At http://www.unctad.org/sections/dite_pccb/docs/dite_pccb_ias0009_en.pdf.

Following its terms of reference, this evaluation does not deal with aspects of quality and effectiveness of programme delivery. These were dealt with in the mid-term evaluation of spring 2003. Suffice to say that the mid-term evaluator commended the secretariat on its speedy and accurate implementation of mid-term evaluation recommendations in this regard (annex 3).

II. Methodology

In order to assess the qualitative impact of this project, a reflexive comparison methodology was used, whereby the direct beneficiaries of the project were asked to assess its impact on their capacities.⁴ To account for the shortfalls of this approach – e.g. the subjective nature of "self-evaluations" and the inability to account for external factors – this evaluation developed and used three additional assessment tools: (1) a reflexive comparison of the indirect beneficiary (in this case, negotiation counterparts of non-intervention countries and negotiation services providers), (2) a comparative quality impact assessment of intervention tools, and (3) a comparison with like evaluations of similar programmes and/or projects. Finally, the overall assessment was compared to similar public and/or private sector programmes.

Specifically, this evaluation encompassed eight distinct assessment elements, as follows:

- *A post-facto questionnaire for all participants in past training and technical assistance events*

For efficiency purposes, the evaluation concentrated this aspect on the intensive training courses and the national seminars organized within the framework of this programme. This limitation takes into account that these two programme dimensions are the most relevant for its capacity building aspects; i.e. both elements focussed on building capacity amongst their direct beneficiaries (namely government officials selected by their respective governments to participate in discussions and/or negotiations of IIAs). Regional seminars served a consensus building function that to a large extent overshadowed their capacity building virtue. Therefore, they need not be assessed from their capacity building value. The BIT negotiation facilitation events carry their capacity building value within their results. These results are already available.

In as far as the training courses are concerned, a total of 365 questionnaires were mailed to the participants of 16 training courses (in English, French and Spanish, respectively) on 10 February 2005. This was followed up with a second mailing on 5 April 2005. At the time of finalization of this report (12 July 2005), 124 replies and 14 responses through bilateral interviews had been received (for a return rate of 39 per cent). This return rate exceeds the range of return rates achieved in similar undertakings, but does not compare favourably with the return rate achieved in the earlier post-facto questionnaire of the mid-term evaluation. However, if put in relation with the responses given in the immediate TACB questionnaires (see Mid-term evaluation) and the responses to the post-facto questionnaire applied in the Mid-term evaluation, it does not necessarily indicate a negative finding, given that effectiveness and usefulness ratios in these two soundings were overwhelmingly positive. Rather, it constitutes a neutral finding that could be brought to bear both negatively and positively on the evaluation findings.

In as far as the national seminars are concerned, Geneva missions were contacted to provide feedback on their country's assessment of the impact of this activity. Geneva missions were selected as the most appropriate channel of obtaining relevant feedback information. Twelve missions of the countries that benefited from this activity were contacted with questionnaires (in English, French and Spanish, respectively) on 14 February 2005. This was followed by a second mailing on 5 April 2005 and phone follow-ups over the month of May 2005. As of the time of finalization of this report (12 July 2005), 7 replies had been received (for a return rate of 58 per cent). While this constitutes a favourable rate of return, the overall small size of the sample diminishes its assessment value.

⁴ See conceptual note dated 5 January 2005.

- *Bilateral interviews with programme participants (in situ)*

For the reasons outlined above it was deemed necessary to concentrate this element on participants in the intensive training courses. However, a number of interview partners also participated in other programme activities, namely BITs facilitation rounds, regional seminars and ad-hoc technical assistance events. Over two field missions (to Africa in March/April 2005 and Asia in May/June 2005), 17 participants were interviewed (3 in Mauritius, 2 in Botswana, 4 in Zambia during the COMESA CCIA discussions (one each from Congo, Egypt, Uganda and Zambia); 2 in the Philippines, 4 in Thailand; and 4 in Malaysia). Interviews were conducted on the basis of a standardized questionnaire.

- *An assessment of the programme's capacity-building impact on the basis of bilateral interviews with negotiation counterparts*

Negotiating counterparts were identified in Belgium, Canada, Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States. Two field missions were undertaken (Sweden and Finland in April 2005 and United Kingdom, United States and Canada in May 2005), and other negotiators were contacted by telephone and/or electronic means. Interviews were conducted on the basis of a standardized questionnaire.

- *An assessment of the programme's capacity-building impact on the basis of bilateral interviews with negotiation services providers from international organizations*

Negotiation services providers were identified in the COMESA and OAS secretariats. A mission (see above) and phone interviews were conducted, and the evaluator participated in the COMESA CCIA discussions held on 22 and 23 March 2005. Interviews were conducted on the basis of a standardized questionnaire. The OAS Secretariat did not respond to the inquiries of the evaluation team.

- *A quantified impact assessment of the intervention tools*

This assessment looked at the number of (1) Internet downloads for the *IIA Issues Paper series*, the *International Investment Instruments Compendium*, the *WIR03* and the BITs database; (2) academic citations for these publications (including web-statistics); (3) independent peer review articles for these publications, academic use and media feedback; (4) feedback received by conventional means; and (5) sales for these publications

- *An impact assessment of other project-related outputs*

This assessment element concentrated on feedback received with regard to the programme's impact on the discussions in the WGTI.

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