

Evaluation Report

Development Account Project

"Enhancing the contribution of preferential trade agreements to inclusive and equitable trade"

FINAL

April 2018

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Commissioned by:
ESCAP / TIID

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge and thank the following people for their strong support and generous assistance during the entire duration of the evaluation project:

- Mia Mikic, Director, Trade, Investment and Innovation Division Trade, Investment and Innovation Division (TIID), ESCAP
- Simon Mevel-Bidaux, [Economic Affairs Officer](#), African Trade Policy Centre (ATPC), Regional Integration and Trade Division (RITD), [ECA](#)
- José E. Durán, Economic Affairs Officer and Chief, Regional Integration Unit, International trade and integration Division, ECLAC
- Panit Buranawijarn, Consultant TIID, for providing information, connections and support
- Edgar Dante, Chief, Evaluation Unit, SPMD, ESCAP for providing guidance in the conduct of the evaluation
- Pakkaporn Visetsilpanon, Research Assistant, Trade Policy and Facilitation Section TIID, ESCAP for assistance with travel arrangements
- Savane Ismael, General Manager, Topaz Group, Guinea, for hosting and organizing in Guinea
- Djene Sougoule, Deputy CEO, Ministry of Commerce and Competition, Government of Guinea, for hosting and organizing in Guinea
- Otgontuya Erdene, PhD student, Mongolia for organising of appointments in Mongolia and assistance with interviews
- Chen-Wen Cheng, Consultant; Trade Policy and Facilitation Section (TPFS), TIID, ESCAP
- Patrick McCombs for assistance with diagrams

List of Acronyms

| | |
|--------|---|
| AfCTA | African Continental Free Trade Area |
| APTIAD | Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Agreements Database |
| APTIP | Asia-Pacific Trade Indicators Portal |
| ARTNeT | The Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade |
| ATPC | African Trade Policy Centre |
| CAN | Andean Community of Nations (CAN) |
| ECA | Economic Commission for Africa |
| ECCAS | Economic Community of Central African States |
| ECLAC | Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean |
| ECOWAS | Economic Community of West African States |
| ESCAP | Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific |
| ESCWA | Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia |
| EU | European Union |
| FTA | Free Trade Agreement |
| IDEP | African Institute for Economic Development and Planning |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| IORA | Indian Ocean Rim Association |
| LAIA | Latin American Integration Association |
| LDC | Least developed country |
| PTA | Preferential Trade Agreement |
| SAARC | South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation |
| SDD | Social Development Division, ESCAP |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| TIID | Trade, Innovation and Investment Division, ESCAP |
| UNNExT | United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade |
| UNCTAD | United Nations Conference on Trade and Development |
| WB | World Bank |

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Executive Summary

1. Introduction

This evaluation reviewed the DA9 Project "Enhancing the contribution of preferential trade agreements to inclusive and equitable trade", a project funded under the 9th tranche of the UN Development Account. It was executed by the ESCAP secretariat, as the project lead, in association with the ECLAC secretariat and ECA secretariat between mid 2014 and December 2017.

2. Purpose and Scope

The project seeks to enhance the capacity of selected developing countries in Asia and the Pacific, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean in order to help countries formulate and implement trade policies, as well as complementary policies, for more inclusive and equitable outcomes.

The objective of the capacity building project is to increase the awareness of government officials and trade negotiators of the potential social and economic impacts of preferential trade agreements, as well deepen their understanding on how to manage such impacts through ex-ante and ex-post adjustments.

The evaluation sought to:

- Determine the level of achievement of the project objectives and expected project accomplishments by examining the results chain, processes and contextual factors;
- Assess the performance and intervention against ESCAP's evaluation criteria of: effectiveness, relevance, efficiency, sustainability and gender and human rights mainstreaming;
- Formulate specific and action-oriented recommendations to inform management decision-making and improve future project/programme design and implementation.

3. Methodology

The evaluation used a mix of data sources and multiple methods which included:

- A desk review of relevant project-related documents and reports;
- Consultations and interviews with consultants and staff of the Commission secretariats;
- Stakeholder and key-informant interviews/focus group discussions with project participants at the final project symposium in December 2017 in Bangkok;
- Two surveys: (i) A survey was administered immediately following the December, 2017 ARTNeT Symposium in Bangkok, the final global meeting of the project; (ii) an on-line, survey to relevant stakeholders and workshop participants, designed to supplement other sources of information and check the ongoing value and sustainability of the project;
- Face to face, telephone or skype interviews were conducted with advisory group members, country expert group members, government officials, private sector actors, presenters, partners and workshop participants;

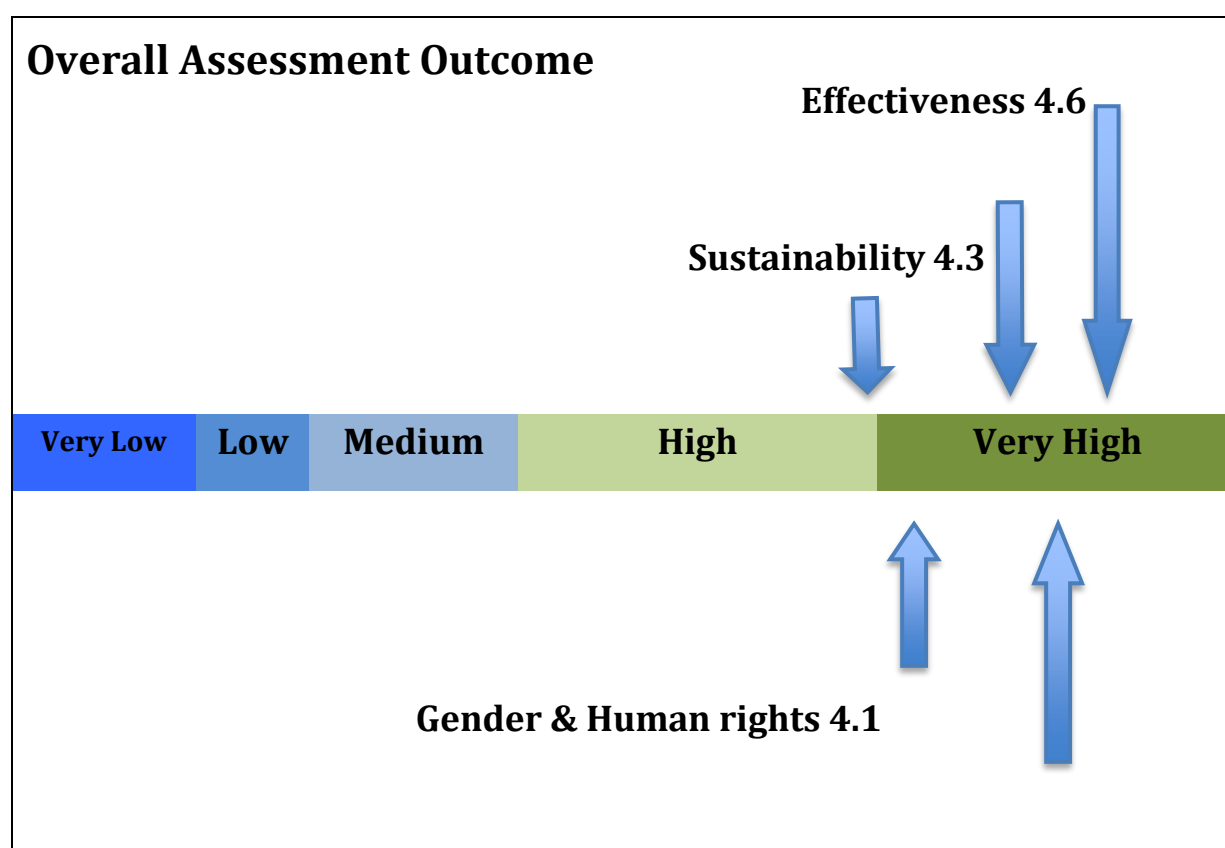
- There were visits to Mongolia and Guinea as two of the project pilot countries, to gain feedback and data through interviews and consultations. Guinea was of specific interest for the evaluation because of the role of the private sector in the project. ¹

4. Conclusions

This project has been found to be very successful and has delivered a strong outcome consistent with the overall objective.

Nineteen country, regional and global workshops and events were conducted. More than 20 country case studies, customized research studies and knowledge products were produced. These include a handbook on sustainability and preferential trade agreements which is a new, key baseline resource and the creation of the on-line, Asia-Pacific Trade Indicators Portal (APTIP). ² APTIP provides easy access to indicators of inclusivity and information on preferential trade agreements in Asia and the Pacific.

The project ranks very highly with stakeholders and participants. ³



¹ A planned visit to Bangladesh was canceled for safety reasons

² Launched at the December 2017 ARNTeT Symposium in Bangkok – the final project event

³ Based on the December 2017 survey and cross-checked with a review of workshop evaluations and interviews

There are concrete examples of immediately used project learning by several countries in each of the three regions.⁴ For example Mongolia and Ecuador used new knowledge to improve their trade negotiations. Guinea private sector businesses, armed with information about trade agreements, expanded their exports, in association with government. In Viet Nam, country trade policies were directly influenced within three months of the country-based workshop. Bangladesh immediately incorporated knowledge gained in the project on more inclusive trade agreements into research and policy advice.

Intra and inter-regional capacity was further strengthened through six regional and global sessions in Bangkok, Geneva, Yaounde and Lima. These forged a stronger set of connections between knowledge, ideas and participants, and contributed to greater systems-wide capacity strengthening. The December 2017 ARTNeT Symposium was the final project meeting and brought together the three Commissions, participants from each of the three regions and expert contributors.

The key characteristics of the project 's success were about (i) linking (people, resources, data and skills), (ii) creating opportunities for learning, development and impact, and (iii) leveraging relationships, partnerships, knowledge and networks to increase capacity, capability and results.

4.1 Effectiveness

The project has been found to be highly effective in achieving objectives. Ninety eight per cent of survey respondents learned new information and 90% still use that knowledge.

In each of the regions (eg Mongolia, Costa Rica, Viet Nam, Bangladesh, Mauritius and Ecuador) new knowledge has been used directly and immediately for trade agreement preparation, in trade negotiations, in undertaking trade policy research and in briefings to Ministers. It has been incorporated immediately into the curriculum for university students in Mongolia and Bangladesh. As well as Guinea, private sector participants in Mongolia have used their new knowledge to understand business exports and to inform the wider private sector of trade agreements. Again, a Guinea participant, running a business for women, used her new-found knowledge to treble employment through new exports to the United States of America.

New, informal networks have been created by participants within and across countries, for example among African country participants, and within Viet Nam and Guinea. Social media and face to face meetings are used to share information. Existing country-based formal and informal networks have been strengthened, for example in Mongolia through the Chamber of Commerce and government/university networks.

ARTNeT, as an established formal network in the Asia Pacific region, has actively incorporated project products. Download usage is high. During the course of the project the website has been accessed and viewed more than 1,800 times, with specific resources downloaded. In its first three months, APTIP was viewed or downloaded 427 times. The ARTNeT e-forum on trade advocacy has been accessed over 300 times and the specific country workshop resources for

⁴ Interview feedback confirmed the high overall ranking and provided several concrete examples of relevance, effectiveness and sustainability.

Viet Nam, Bangladesh, Mongolia, Myanmar and the Islamic Republic of Iran have been accessed more than 750 times.⁵

Both ARTNeT and UNNExT (UN Network of Experts for Paperless Trade) experts contributed their services to the project advisory board.

4.2 Relevance

The project material has been found to be highly relevant with relevant support provided to countries through workshops, products, web-based resources and workshop follow up from consultants and Commission staff. A range of relevant methodologies for understanding, preparing for and undertaking more inclusive trade negotiations for trade agreements were provided in workshops and on-line. These included technical methodologies such as the general equilibrium model; intellectual property analytical approaches; gender integration approaches and labour rights rules.

The DA9 project enabled immediate use of information in trade negotiation preparations, advice and research as well as immediate use of existing trade agreements for improving outcomes from trade related to inclusivity:

- eighty seven per cent of respondents found the project workshops, regional and global sessions, and resources relevant for their work
- there were high levels of participant engagement in events, workshops and use of on-line material after events which are indicators of relevance

The relevance of the project was noted by other, eligible countries. Four countries -Mongolia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Guinea and Senegal - became additional participants. Honduras and Guatemala requested and received assistance to help deepen their customs union.

4.3 Efficiency

The project implementation has been found to be highly efficient, operated in a partnership-based manner and within budget while being responsive and adaptive to issues and unexpected circumstances, such as political unrest.⁶ Specific products and materials were created to reflect and support country needs and inclusivity issues. They were a hallmark of the project and contributed to efficient utilization of project resources.

The project maximized the different strengths of each of the Commissions enabling the three Commissions to work effectively as a team and enhancing project implementation efficiency.

The project also created and utilized synergies and cost-efficiencies through partnering arrangements and attracting additional resources (such as US\$80,000 from Global Affairs

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