

AID-FOR-TRADE CASE STORY

The African Trade Policy Centre (ATPC)

THE AFRICAN TRADE POLICY CENTRE

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The role of ATPC/UNECA in delivering AfT to African countries

UNECA as a regional institution plays a crucial role in AfT operationalization since Africa is home to the largest concentration of the potential beneficiaries of the AfT initiative. Effectively, since the establishment of the ATPC in May 2003 with the support of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), UNECA's support to building African trade capacities has increased significantly. The core ATPC objective is to strengthen the human, institutional and policy capacity of African governments to formulate and implement sound trade policies and participate more effectively and equitably in international trade negotiations.

An important component of regional integration is trade facilitation, an area where AfT is expected to pay particular emphasis. For instance, immediate assistance is needed to harmonize customs procedures so as to minimize delays at African borders. Moreover, the removal of many roadblocks along major transport corridors, most of which connect landlocked countries to the sea, is also needed so as to improve trade flows. ATPC/UNECA has been a major voice for infrastructure development in Africa and could therefore play a key role in the AfT components that target trade facilitation.

OBJECTIVE PURSUED

To establish the most appropriate participatory approaches and mechanisms for ensuring benefits to both men and women from ATPC activities are institutionalized and sustainable in UNECA.

DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

ATPC is a trade-related technical assistance programme designed to strengthen the capacity of African Governments to formulate, analyze, and implement sound trade policies and programmes and participate more effectively and equitably in international trade.

ATPC is a separate unit within the UNECA headed by a Senior Regional Advisor, who reports to the Director of the Regional Integration, Infrastructure and Trade Division (RITD) of UNECA. Apart from its own limited staff,

the Centre draws on UNECA's contribution and strength in RITD and other UNECA divisions.

There is an Advisory Board composed of the funding development partner (CIDA) as well as representatives of three Regional Economic Communities (RECs)- namely East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Southern African Development Community (SADC)- and negotiating groups, African Union (AU), African Development Bank (AfDB), UN agencies and other partners, which provides ATPC with overall guidance, approves its work plans, reviews programme implementation, and monitors the requirement and availability of resources for the Centre.

INSTITUTIONAL CONTRIBUTION OF UNECA AND CIDA TO THE FUNCTIONING OF ATPC

UNECA provides staff resources, offices, equipment and facilities for the Centre, which has benefited tremendously from substantive contributions from the Commission's trade experts. For instance, staff of UNECA's Regional Integration, Infrastructure and Trade Division (RITD), have been involved in the use of latest modelling techniques to assess the impact of trade negotiations on the economies of selected African countries.

ATPC has also benefited enormously from UNECA's strong convening power. This has been particularly useful in achieving ATPC's objective of building consensus on key trade positions among African countries and stakeholders.

In addition to providing the funds used to create ATPC and for the day-to-day running of the Centre, CIDA plays an advisory and capacity building role. In this regard, it is represented in ATPC's Advisory Board, which provides overall guidance, approves work plans, reviews programme implementation, and monitors the requirement and availability of resources for the project.

CIDA has demonstrated its commitment to contribute in building the capacity of ATPC staff, so as to ensure a more efficient and effective implementation of the Centre's activities. To this end, it has provided training for ATPC staff on results based management.

FACTORS FOR SUCCESS

ATPC has unique advantages since it is recognized and accepted as policy advisors to national governments.

Internal factors for success:

Strong collaboration between UNECA/African Center for Gender and Social Development (ACGSD), UNECA/Food Security and Sustainable Development Division (FSSD), UNECA/RITD, and ATPC

External factors for success:

Strong support from CIDA, since the ready availability of resources from CIDA continues to be an enabling factor in the sense that the development partner has provided the resources for the implementation of the project in a timely manner. This enabled the Centre to focus on implementing its programme including giving a rapid and flexible response to requests for its services.

Strong collaboration between the Programme for Building African Capacity for Trade (PACT)/ International Trade Centre (ITC); United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and ATPC.

Finally the composition of ATPC Advisory Board is an enabling factor for the Centre because the Board brings together various stakeholders whose contributions widen the horizons of the Centre and enrich its work programme.

CONSTRAINING FACTORS

The achievements recorded by ATPC so far are due largely to the commitment of its staff, efficient UNECA management, substantive support of staff of the RITD of UNECA, and more importantly, the accessibility to CIDA funding, which made it possible to undertake the project.

However, the Centre lacks sufficient human resources to meet the increasing demand for its services from RECs, thus ATPC needs to strike the right balance with regards to its various activities including the coverage of different trade negotiations; other trade topics; and gender representation in its workshops and training programmes. This requires overcoming resource and staffing constraints.

There is also a felt need to give predictability to the future of ATPC on which several key groups have come to rely. The continued credibility of the Centre depends on its ability to continue its work, which in turn is dependent on the resources that it receives.

Particular attention should be given to address issues such as the brain drain and the project's reliance on CIDA as the only development partner. Another challenge to ATPC is the loss of participants trained by the Centre to other sectors due to the stiff competition for quality staff in African countries. This means that further efforts need to be concentrated on building a large and self-renewing base of such personnel if the final impact is to be achieved.

LESSONS LEARNED

There is a need to strike a balance between the limited capacity and resources of ATPC and the demands from the three RECs (EAC, ECOWAS and SADC), since it is not conceivable that ATPC can service all requests from these RECs. An emerging constraint in the organizational capacity of ATPC is the inadequacy of staff for on-going and envisaged activities. ATPC therefore requires additional resources to strengthen the knowledge it generates with respect to issues related to the harmonization of RECs policies, since this issue remains one of the greatest challenges facing the continent. In this context, ATPC has an important role to play in the years ahead. It has to deepen its research and training programmes in order to assist in promoting intra-African trade, facilitating regional integration, and mainstreaming trade into national development framework, taking poverty reduction, environment and gender dimensions into account.

Concerning ATPC training workshops and seminars, there is a need to make the workshops more focused by reducing agenda items or addressing a single trade related theme.

ATPC performance can be improved in two main ways. The first would be to have some predictability about the future of the project to enable long-term planning of activities and ensure that the project has the desired impact. The second way in which ATPC performance can be improved would be to widen the range of trade-related issues in which the Centre has capacity to provide services. This is important because trade negotiations now encompass non-traditional areas like intellectual property for example.

ATPC SUCCESS STORIES TO DATE

Operationalizing the African Alliance for Electronic Commerce

ATPC spearheaded the creation of the African Alliance for Electronic Commerce (AAEC) by preparing the operational modalities of the Alliance and hosting its launching ceremony in March 2009. The Alliance is now fully functional with its headquarters in Dakar, Senegal. AAEC Executive Committee meetings have been held in Marrakech, Morocco; and Accra, Ghana on 21 April 2009 and 9-10 December 2009 respectively. ATPC attended the Accra meeting and hosted the second General Assembly of AAEC in June 2010. As a model AfT initiative, AAEC has been invited to high-

level AfT meetings such as the North-South Corridor AfT meeting held in Lusaka, Zambia on 6-7 April 2009 and attended by 4 African Heads of State; and the ECOWAS AfT review meeting in Abuja, Nigeria on 27-28 January 2010. As such, AAEC is an important and concrete contribution of ATPC to the AfT agenda.

Feasibility study for the establishment of dry ports in Ethiopia

In response to a request from the Ethiopian Government, ATPC undertook a feasibility study for the establishment of dry ports in Ethiopia. The study was reviewed by representatives of key stakeholders of international trade in Ethiopia, including: Ethiopian Maritime Affairs Authority, Ethiopian Revenues and Customs Authority, Ethiopian Shipping Lines Share Company, Ethiopian Insurance Enterprise, Ethiopian Commercial Bank, Ethiopian Quality and Standards Authority, Maritime and Transport Services Enterprise, private banks, insurance companies, as well as clearing and forwarding agents. The quality and results of the study have generated widespread interest amongst high-level government officials in the country who have indicated their interest to see the recommendations implemented. Financial institutions such as the World Bank and the African Development Bank (AfDB) have also indicated their interest to be associated with the implementation of the recommendations of the study, which is considered to be a model AfT project, and a concrete contribution of ATPC to the initiative.

Recognition as key partner in trade and transport facilitation and transit transport Corridor management

As a result of the relevance of its research and publications as well as the successful organization of workshops and study tours, ATPC has positioned itself, and is recognized, as a leading promoter of trade facilitation in Africa. In that regard, the Centre has established partnerships and received requests from important sub-regional organizations such as the Walvis Bay Corridor Group (WBCG) and the Ports Management Association of Eastern and Southern Africa (PMAESA) to undertake studies aimed at improving the efficiency of transit corridors and to facilitate dialogue amongst key stakeholders of international trade. ATPC is also a member of the AfT Advisory Group and has taken part in ongoing discussions on evaluating AfT.

Creation of trade and gender; trade and environment networks

The gender inception workshop organized by ATPC/UNECA in April 2009 as well as the follow-up training in June 2009 resulted in creation of a group of trade and gender advocates. The ITC's Women in Trade Programme also organized an Expert Roundtable on the Gender Dimension of Aid for Trade in October 2010. Participants prepared case studies on gender aspects of AfT that will be forwarded to a future WTO call for case studies. ATPC presented a case story on this issue and became a member on the Gender Expert Network formed by ITC for AfT. ATPC also established a network of policy makers, researchers, academia, civil society and private sectors representatives dealing with trade and environment issues in Northern Africa. The creation of this network was announced, during the third edition of the Forum for Development in North Africa, which took place from 29 to 31 October 2009 in Rabat, Morocco. ATPC established a similar network in Southern and Eastern Africa in May 2009.

Influencing the debate on Aid for Trade (AfT)

Through its research and presentations at high-level meetings, ATPC has influenced the debate on

AfT and played a leading role in shaping Africa's position. High-level meetings at which ATPC presented AfT patterns and challenges in Africa include for example the AU Conference of Ministers of Trade held in Addis Ababa on 19-20 March, 2009; the High-Level North-South Corridor AfT meeting held in Lusaka, Zambia on 6-7 April 2009 and attended by 4 Heads of State (Kenya, Zambia, Uganda, and South Africa); and the second Global AfT review held in Geneva on 6-7 July 2009, the expert group meeting and workshop on AfT and Africa's trading capacity: supply, demand and performance in UNECA, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 31 May- 2 June 2010.

CONCLUSIONS

ATPC has proved its relevance, efficiency and ability to respond in a timely manner in assisting African countries to build capacity in trade-related issues. Stakeholders adjudge the Centre to be effective in undertaking activities related to its service lines, especially in research, training and dissemination of its products. In spite of its limited human and financial resources, ATPC has been able to achieve its objective to respond to the capacity constraints of African trade negotiators at multilateral negotiations. A direct positive result of this development is the fact that African trade negotiators are increasingly involved in discussions on substantive issues in WTO and EPAs negotiations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Putting in place strategies to meet increasing demands

In addition to drawing upon UNECA/RITD expertise, ATPC needs to strengthen its human resources by recruiting additional staff to handle the increasing incoming demands for support from beneficiaries. Other options include collaborating with existing research institutions, and drawing from the pool of experts and consultancy services that abound in Africa.

Providing more specialized training

ATPC should assist in further improving the expertise of RECs officials through specialized training programs taking into account cross-cutting issues like gender, HIV/AIDS and environment. In this regard, more emphasis should be placed on the training of trainers.

Enhancing the link between Geneva and Brussels based negotiators and African capitals

ATPC should assist African countries in enhancing the link between their negotiators in Geneva and Brussels and officials in the capitals. This link is crucial for coherence in negotiated outcomes and proper understanding of linkages between EPAs and WTO negotiations.

Assisting African countries translate international trade agreements into domestic legislation

ATPC should assist member States in translating international trade agreements into domestic legislation. This could be done by building the capacity of parliaments and by revising domestic trade laws.

Supporting regional economic integration

ATPC should undertake more work related to promoting regional integration. In this regard, collaboration with the RECs should be intensified.

Strengthening partnership with AU, other regional, continental and international organizations

Existing collaboration and partnership with AU and AfDB should be strengthened to enhance ownership of ATPC outputs. In addition, the Centre needs to build on and sustain its partnership with other international organizations and initiatives such as UNCTAD, UNDP, ITC, JITAP, ACP, South-Centre, Commonwealth, and DFID, among others. This will help to avoid duplication of efforts and enable ATPC to benefit from the strengths of these institutions.

Exploring a wide range of options to ensure ATPC's sustainability

While the commitment and good gesture of the Canadian Government in funding the Centre are well appreciated, an all-inclusive strategy should be devised to encourage more development partners to come on board and provide much-needed financial assistance that would enable the Centre to meet its major challenges. In addition, other possible options including the creation of a Trust Fund, through partnership with regional, continental, and international institutions as well as private sector organizations, should be explored to guarantee long-term funding and sustainability of the Centre. It is unlikely that the positive effects of ATPC will continue if the project is not extended beyond this second phase. This is because African Regional Economic Communities still require a critical mass of experts with the requisite analytical skills to undertake the kind of activities such as the trade policy analysis that ATPC is presently helping them with.

Creating direct communication links with stakeholders

ATPC should continue to disseminate its publications in a timely manner and broaden its outreach as its products have been confirmed to be very useful to African policy makers and trade negotiators. The Centre also needs to devise a more direct communication link to member states and other stakeholders to ensure rapid response and wider outreach to beneficiaries and partners. In this regard, ATPC needs to enhance its efforts to target the media and trade unions for delivery of its products. ATPC should also extend its cooperation to private sector organizations on a more systematic basis.