

Objective

To provide a discussion forum to deliberate on various trade-related capacity building initiatives in Africa from the point of view of development and poverty reduction. This cross fertilisation of experiences and lessons learnt from these initiatives will facilitate appropriate policy responses from the civil society's perspective to evolve a synergistic position, and take forward well-argued viewpoints for pro-poor development and sustainable economic growth.

Background

The debate on linkages between trade, development and poverty reduction is not new. In fact trade economists see international trade as a measure for enhancing economic growth. Trade policy affects poverty through its effects on economic growth and equitable income distribution. A pro-poor growth policy has greater impact on reducing poverty, than growth per se. And, given the present trade and investment regime, an open and simple trade policy can foster some external discipline, reduce domestic market distortions and narrow the scope for wrong or unbalanced policies.

The issue of linkages between trade, development and poverty reduction can be analysed from various dimensions like the impact of protectionist policies on the poor. If trade policy benefits relatively well off by protecting import-competing sectors controlled by capital owners, then trade liberalisation is likely to redistribute income to the poor. This notion is however based on certain assumptions, which have less relevance in today's trade and investment regime. The changing policy dimensions and concomitant role for policy coherence needs to be analysed.

Presently, efforts are being made to look into various dimensions of the issue, and make trade and investment liberalisation work for the poor. But unfortunately, many such efforts do not attempt to look into the issue holistically i.e. in both theoretical and political economic terms, supported by civil society's (Northern as well as Southern) understanding. Furthermore, issues relating to the effects of trade and investment liberalisation on the poor needs to be looked into in a positive manner and an overarching purpose of all the activities is to find out the conditions necessary for mainstreaming international trade into national development (poverty reduction) strategy.

International Trade has a major role to play in attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) especially reducing absolute poverty by half by 2015 (MDG 1). This project aims to manifest the policy relevance on international trade on poverty reduction and thus help in articulating policy coherence between international trading system and national development strategies to reduce poverty levels.

Context

The project "Linkages Between Trade, Development and Poverty Reduction" is a four-year project spanning from January 2005 – December 2008. To comprehend the linkages between trade and poverty reduction, a study was made on select trade-related capacity building initiatives in Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA). Governmental and inter-governmental organisations like DFID, IMF, ITC, UNDP, UNCTAD, World Bank implemented these initiatives in partnership with respective country's governmental departments. The study was done by reviewing the origin, objectives and outcomes of these initiatives to gather relevant information for effective policy recommendations to make the initiatives more pro-poor and development oriented for respective countries and regions.

The study looks at seven different initiatives undertaken in Kenya, Uganda, Zambia like DFID – Regional Trade Facilitation Programme (RTFP) for SADC, USAID – Zambia Trade and Investment Enhancement Project (ZAMTIE). The selection was done by keeping in mind the diversity of donor community involved in trade related capacity building in Eastern and Southern Africa, diversity of management and implement set-ups as some of them were bilateral while some were regional. Implementation of activities under the Integrated Framework was also considered.

This varied set of initiatives was considered for a better understanding of the linkages between trade and poverty reduction through looking at the diversity in focus and breadth of these initiatives. This study presents some key messages and lessons learnt from the feedback process by trade officials, providers and other stakeholders.

Given this context, this Regional Conference is being organised to take forward lessons from these initiatives towards better implementation of similar activities in future, in particular to find answers on how to make trade-related aid more effective and coherent with the overall development strategies of countries/regions. The conference will evoke different thoughts on policies and practices of governments and civil society organisations to enable them to strengthen their collective perspectives and positions in the debate on the linkages between trade, development and poverty reduction. At the same time the conference also aims to analyse the ineptness in reducing poverty in Eastern and Southern Africa through trade (among other means) despite rigorous efforts made by various developmental organisations. This will help in developing the capacity of various stakeholders in better comprehending trade-related capacity building efforts of various agencies from the perspective of development and poverty reduction.

The Event

Design: *To involve representatives of project partners in Eastern and Southern Africa, donors, inter-governmental agencies, governments, civil society, media, academia in a one and half day conference. It will be start in the afternoon of 16th October and will continue on 17th October. The deliberations will be organised in a structured form so that there will be time for debate and discussions. Recommendations will be taken forward to various levels.*

Venue, Date & Time

Silver Springs Hotel, Nairobi, Kenya
Monday, 16 October 2006, 1700 hrs to 1900 hrs
Tuesday, 17 October 2006, 0830 hrs to 1500 hrs

Organisers

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