

UGANDA

MBALE TDP DIALOGUE REPORT

on
**LINKAGES BETWEEN TRADE, DEVELOPMENT
AND POVERTY REDUCTION**

under
TDP PROJECT

held at
THE PRIVATE SECTOR PROMOTION CENTRE – MBALE

organized by
Consumer Education Trust (CONSENT)

and
CUTS International
Centre for International Trade, Economics & Trade (CUTS-CITEE)

supported by
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Netherlands and
Department for International Development, United Kingdom

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Introduction

The third in the series the socio-economic dialogues under the TDP project initiative was held in Mbale on 4.10.08 at Private Sector Promotion Centre – Mbale coordinated by CONSENT offices in Mbale.

The dialogue attracted 52 participants from the public and private sectors including, civil society organizations, education institutions and the media (see attached list).

Mr. Kato Hussein, Director of Programmes, Institute of Management Science and Technology IMSAT and Chair, CONSENT Mbale Local Advice Group opened the dialogue observing that the dialogue was a follow-up to the 2007 one. Noted that they are intended to create awareness, sensitize stakeholders to advocate for trade to work for the poor, for development, equitability to enhance standards of living for the populace. Further empower consumers to speak out on socio-economic issues that affect the citizens and enable them participation in the policy making process on issues concerning trade, development and poverty reduction, to facilitate informed decision making, effective social policy and service delivery.

Observed that we are all consumers! It is imperative, therefore, that we become responsible citizens by consuming responsibly and promote development. This can only happen if every stakeholder – consumer takes the initiative to acquire the necessary knowledge on consumer life and endeavours to behave self – reliantly and rationally. It is only then will the consumers be able to influence policy and make rational decisions on socio-economic issues.

Thus questioning how many customers are aware, at the time of buying, that they are buying expired or fake goods? Stressing that as good citizens we are free to fight against bad business practices, both as individuals and as organized groups. As responsible citizens we should go in the field and document what we think are bad business practices in which consumers are being exploited.

The level of consumer protection in our country may be very low but we can improve it by mobilizing ourselves to support consumer organizations like CONSENT so as to empower the ordinary consumer. Noting that the starting point should be to raise stakeholder awareness about the existing laws, policies and procedures, take advantage of the good ones and see how to influence the revision or removal of the bad ones.

As for the relationship between Trade, Development and Poverty Reduction, it should be noted that Trade and Poverty Reduction are essentially linked through the prices that people pay for the goods and services they buy as consumers and the incomes they get from the sale of their products.

To increase the welfare of the consumer therefore, we need to ensure that the consumer gets value for his/her money and that he/she adds value to his/her products. This is an exercise that cannot be accomplished over night, it is a continuous exercise that must go on for a relatively long time, using all the communication channels available. This dialogue being only one of them.

Mr. Mutinye Sam Department of Social Work and Social Administration, IMSAT, in his presentation noted:

- Economically consumers may be empowered through participations in consumer cooperation activities, through which their problems can be voiced.
- In relations to poverty reduction, consumer empowerment protects citizens from financial exploitation so as to allow them retain enough disposable income.
- Enlightening citizens on the culture of saving and eventual investment as a way of increasing production may in the long run, eradicate poverty.
- Through trade, stakeholders ought to extend financial support to consumers so as to enhance business activities.
- There is also need to empower citizens with entrepreneurial skills as a way of eradicating poverty.
- Socially, consumer education may be another strategy aimed at eradicating poverty.
- This may be done through adult literacy programs.
- Through sensitization workshops, seminars and dialogues like this one, citizens could be empowered to participate in development programmes/projects as a strategy to eradicate poverty at the grass root level.
- At the micro level, the ability of the poor to take advantage of greater trading opportunities is mediated by the wealth, creating assets they have access to where the poor is involved in production, these include;
 - Access to productive and secure land holdings
 - Access to affordable inputs e.g. technology
 - Access to credit
 - Availability of skills to utilize the opportunities available.
- Any policy that impacts on the extent to which the poor have access to these wealth creating assets will have an impact on development and poverty reduction regardless of the trading environment.
- At the macro level, economic stability, responsible stewardship by government and a secure infrastructure network are vital to the development process and the ability of poor to take advantage of trading opportunities.
- Trade is nurtured by stability, predictability and a positive business environment. Any factor which disturbs these factors will hinder the ability of trade to stimulate development and poverty reduction. In this respect, conflict, governance and economic management all have an important role to play in influencing the trading environment.
- Hence the need to empower the consumer to take active participation in all matters concerning the development of our country.

Mr. Watulatsu Samuel, Trustee and Founder Member Foundation for the Development of Needy Communities noted in the 2nd presentation that the difference between the poor and rich countries is not the age of the country. This can be shown by countries like India and Egypt that are more than 2000 years old and are poor. On the other hand, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, that are over 150 years ago are developed and rich countries today.

Observing that the difference between poor and rich countries does not reside in the available natural resources giving the example of Japan as having limited territory, 80% is mountainous, inadequate for agriculture and cattle rearing, but is the second world

economy. The country is like an immense floating factory. Importing raw materials from all over the world and exporting manufactured products.

Another example is Switzerland, which does not grow cocoa but has the best chocolate in the world.

In its limited territory they raise animals and plant the soil for 4 months in a year but they produce the best dairy products. It is a small security that transmits an image with security order and labour. It is the world's strong safe.

Executives from rich countries who communicate with their counter parts in poor countries show that there is no significant intellectual differences.

Race or skin colour are also not important. Immigrants labeled lazy in their countries of origin are the productive power in rich European countries.

What then is the difference?

The difference is the attitude with which people are framed along the years by the education and the culture.

On analyzing the behaviour of the people in rich and developed countries we find that the great majority follow the following principles in their lives:

1. Ethics, as a basic principle
2. Integrity
3. Responsibility
4. Respect to the laws and rules
5. Respect to the rights for other citizens
6. Work loving
7. Strive to save and invest
8. Punctuality
9. Will of super action

In the poor countries only a minority follow these basic principles in their daily life. We are not poor because we lack natural resources or because Mother Nature was cruel to us! We are poor because we lack ATTITUDE.

We lack the will to comply with and teach these functional principles of the rich and developed societies. Thus this should be the starting pint in our quest to empower the consumer for active citizenship.

WAY FORWARD

- Each and every participant of this dialogue should strive to learn and implement the nine functional principles of rich and developed societies listed above.
- It is the responsibility of each one of us to learn and teach others the basic rights, obligations and responsibilities of consumers.
- We should encourage the ordinary citizens to embrace the consumer movement (Consumer organizations in their local areas) in order to amplify their voice, since it is very hard for an individual consumer to influence policy let above to be heard.

- We should strive to sensitize the ordinary citizens about government policies and programmes that are aimed at improving the welfare of the consumers. We should then go a head to analyze these policies/programmes in order to assess their impact and to take corrective measures.
- We should use every available opportunity to educate consumers about their role as citizens in shaping the destiny of our country.
- As good citizens we should have
 - Inspiration, motivation, courage, determination and ability to conceive and execute divine ideas that make out country a better place to live in. Let us strive to make a difference by impacting on our country with the investment of our personality.
 - Consumer empowerment for active citizenship is a responsibility of all of us. We should therefore strive to ensure that every citizen consumes sustainably for example;
 - Plant 3 trees before cutting done.
 - Leave in a clean and safe environment through proper waste management.
 - Efficient use of resources like water, electricity, airtime etc.
 - In whatever we do we should always aim at getting value addition.
 - The fight against corruption should be every citizen's responsibility. It should not be left to the IGG, Ministry of ethics and integrity or H.E the president alone.
 - The opening of CONSENT – Consumer Advice Point (CAP) office in Mbale is a very welcome idea but the question is “what can we do to sustain this office and to maximize it's output”? We need more dialogue seminars and workshops!

Annex I:

Program for the dialogue 0930 – 13.30 HRS

0930-1000 HRS Registration

1000-1010 HRS Opening remarks Mr. Kato Hussein, Director of Programmes, Institute of Management Science and Technology IMSAT and Chair, CONSENT Mbale Local Advice Group

1010-1020 HRS 1st Presentation: Mr. Mutinye Sam Department of Social Work and Social Administration, IMSAT,

1020-1100 HRS Discussant

1100-1120 HRS 2nd Presentation Mr. Watulatsu Samuel, Trustee and Founder Member Foundation for the Development of Needy Communities – 2nd Presenter

1120-1320 HRS General Discussions

1320-1330 HRS Resolutions and Closing Remarks

1330 HRS Lunch and Departure

Annex II: TDP Dialogue List of Participants

No	Name	Contact: Organization, Telephone & Email
1.	Mwisaka Janet	
2.	Soddo Paul	Mbale Municipal Council Tel: 0712-923949 paulsoddo@yahoo.com
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