



Independent project evaluation of the

**United Nations Development Account Project 1213K**  
**Capacity-building for the Formulation and Implementation**  
**of MDGs-oriented Trade Policies**

Mr. Paul Cox  
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EMU can be contacted at:

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development  
Palais des Nations, 8-14,  
Av. de la Paix, 1211 Geneva 10  
Switzerland

Telephone: +41 22 917 1234  
Fax: +41 22 917 0057  
Email: [evaluation@unctad.org](mailto:evaluation@unctad.org)  
Website: [www.unctad.org](http://www.unctad.org)

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# LIST OF ACRONYMS

AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
CFTA	Continental Free Trade Area
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
DESA	Department of Economic and Social Affairs
DITC	Division of International Trade in Goods and Services, and Commodities
DTIS	Diagnostic Trade Integration Study
EA	Expected Accomplishment
EAC	East African Community
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
EIF	Enhanced Integration Framework
EMU	Evaluation and Monitoring Unit
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IA	Indicator of Achievement
ICBT	Informal Cross-Border Trade
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IICA	Inter-American Institute of Agricultural Sciences
ILO	International Labour Organization
ITA	Information Technology Agreement
LDC	Least Developed Country
MCTI	Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry (Zambia)
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MITI	Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry (Botswana)
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
N	Number (of observations)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NTP	National Trade Policy
PD	Project Document
RBM	Results-Based Management
REC	Regional Economic Community

RTA	Regional Trade Agreement
SACU	Southern Africa Customs Union
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
SPR	Services Policy Review
STR	Simplified Trading Regime
TFTA	Tripartite Free Trade Agreement
TNCDB	Trade Negotiations and Commercial Diplomacy Branch
TOR	Terms of Reference
TPF	Trade Policy Framework
TPR	Trade Policy Review
TPSD	Trade Policy and Sustainable Development
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDA	United Nations Development Account
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
WTO	World Trade Organization

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Background and Context

This Report has been prepared for UNCTAD in connection with the final independent evaluation of the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) funded Project 1213K titled “Capacity-building for the formulation and implementation of MDG-oriented trade policies in developing countries contributing to accelerating achievement of MDGs in the context of multiple and interrelated development challenges.”

The project’s total budget was US\$694,000. Implementation was carried out by UNCTAD’s Trade Negotiations and Commercial Diplomacy Branch (TNCDB) of the Division on International Trade in Goods and Services, and Commodities (DITC). Implementation commenced in early 2013 and ended in November 2016.

The Project’s objective is evident from its title, although changing circumstances in global trade and development led the project team to adapt its work to the post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda and a surge of interest in regional trade integration among African countries. The main activities consisted of preparation of trade policy framework (TPF) studies, inter-regional workshops, national multi-stakeholder consultations, and advisory services and training. Nine countries benefited directly from the project. These are Panama, Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, Algeria, Tunisia, Angola, Namibia, Botswana and Zambia.

The evaluation was performed between December 2016 and February 2017. It follows the requirements of Terms of Reference (TOR) issued by UNCTAD’s Evaluation and Monitoring Unit (EMU) and observes Norms and Standards and other guidance published by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG).

The assessment is based on detailed examination of six evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, gender equality and human rights, and partnerships and synergies) and 19 evaluation questions (presented in a separate Inception Report). Key data collection tools were project documentation, discussions with responsible UNCTAD staff, key informant interviews conducted by phone/Skype, and an online survey.

## Key Findings

The overall conclusion of the evaluation is that while the Project has been modestly funded, it has been a highly relevant and largely very effective initiative with a reach that has extended to more than nine developing countries. Aspects of the project design and management factors have posed challenges along the way, however the project team has demonstrated a determination to adjust and press forward. While it is too early to identify impact, there are indications of outcomes and there is an expectation that with appropriate follow-up support the initiative will lead to long-term change with societal implications. In terms of the six evaluation criteria:

## Relevance

There is overwhelming evidence that the Project was highly relevant and the project team took appropriate steps to adapt the project design during the life span of the Project to match changing global trade and development contexts. Project activities showed a clear relationship with the objective and expected accomplishments in the logic model; however, the intervention logic – and the project team’s planning of activities – could have been better attuned to capacity development.

## Effectiveness

All of the main activities were completed as planned, and with some of them the project team exceeded expectations for project reach both geographically (more countries) and time-wise (assistance available and supplied over longer time periods). Both the participant feedback sheets completed after inter-regional and national workshops, and ratings provided during key informant interviews, revealed assessments of effectiveness which were uniformly between good and excellent for all major project activities. Evidence of improved knowledge, understanding and capacity with respect to development-oriented trade policies and intra-African trade was tempered by the remarks of many interviewees who expressed scepticism that trade ministry staff were better equipped post-project. Positive scoring on improved institutional capacity was accompanied by a full range of comments, including several suggesting that capacity building is a lengthy, perhaps continuous process.

## Efficiency

The Project was delivered on time and within budget in spite of being modestly funded and complicated by time delays and a variety of underlying constraints. The project team was successful in utilizing resources from in-house and external partners, and it benefited from some flexibility in the use of allocated funding between spending envelopes. Project implementation was adversely affected by administrative delays - notably the year-long delay in project approval and funding allotment - and other internal and external constraints.

## Sustainability

Indications are available that recommendations from completed TPFs are in the process of being incorporated into trade regimes in four target countries; furthermore, UNCTAD has already received four requests for follow-up assistance. Interviewees generally indicated satisfaction with the level of national ‘ownership’ over the work accomplished by the Project and confidence that some TPF recommendations would be implemented in their country’s trade regime. Regarding performance measurement and knowledge management, the evaluation identified a number of items worthy of consideration in the design of future projects of a similar nature.

## Gender equality and human rights

Gender equality, and its mainstreaming in trade policy, was not designated as a project objective or addressed by any specific activities, but the project team took into account female representation in the selection of beneficiaries. A review of TPF documents prepared under the Project found no recommendations explicitly addressing gender empowerment or

mainstreaming. Human rights was not mentioned in the project design, however its treatment on equity issues facing vulnerable populations was clearly evident in some TPF documents.

#### Partnerships and synergies

The Project served to strengthen partnerships of different kinds, notably through opportunities provided in workshops for dialogue between the public and private sectors, and for the building of relationships between officials in different ministries as well as with regional entities. There was a very close fit between the Project and the directions adopted by the UNCTAD<sup>13</sup> and UNCTAD<sup>14</sup> conferences, as well as the objective of UNCTAD's subprogramme 3 on International Trade.

#### Recommendations

The evaluation concludes with seven recommendations, each tied in to the main body of the report, and five lessons learned. The recommendations (in condensed form) are:

- (a) UNCTAD should allocate more resources to background scoping work in a target country, especially with respect to existing capacity gaps and the means through which these might be filled.
- (b) UNCTAD should ensure that project design is accompanied by a results framework which meets current UN requirements, especially with respect to indicators of achievement and utilization of RBM terminology.
- (c) UNCTAD should give specific attention to ensuring that each project is provided with adequate staff and budgetary resources to properly conduct monitoring and evaluation and that higher-level issues are properly addressed in program evaluation.
- (d) UNCTAD should commission a post-project evaluation to determine the impacts of its development-oriented trade policy initiatives and their contribution to progress in the attainment of MDGs/SDGs.
- (e) UNCTAD should build into future project designs a communication strategy that is specific to the project's objectives and supportive of wider UNCTAD needs.
- (f) UNCTAD should be more specific in the wording of key enabling documents such as the Project Document and Terms of Reference for national consultants regarding agency-wide expectations on cross-cutting issues.
- (g) UNCTAD should consider a comprehensive approach for a follow-up project of a similar nature in developing countries, including analysis of a range of design features.

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