

CBI AND ITC: A LONG HISTORY OF COLLABORATION

The Netherlands' Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries (CBI) and the International Trade Centre (ITC) have a long history of collaboration. Over the years the partnership has developed in both scope and intensity. It took on a new dimension in 2005 when the Government of Netherlands, through the CBI, set up a Trust Fund that enabled ITC to provide technical assistance to a large number of African countries. This focused on capacity-building for Trade Support Institutions (TSIs) in the field of trade information management. The programme, which concludes in August 2009, was positively assessed, according to the evaluation of the programme undertaken in late 2008. In particular:

- The agreement between ITC and CBI not only strengthened their partnership but developed synergies between the work of the two organizations that were appreciated by their target groups.
- In general the activities undertaken by ITC in collaboration with CBI were appreciated in the countries concerned.
- Capacity-building activities greatly benefited from the connection that was made with the CBI's Training of Trade Trainers programmes.
- Capacity-building activities in relation to TSIs were evaluated as being positive.
- The development of information products and services was appreciated by beneficiaries, with a request for greater adaptation to local needs.

A new phase in the partnership

Following this positive experience and taking account of the lessons learned during the first phase, CBI and ITC signed a new four-year Partnership Agreement in March 2009. Under this agreement they will work together in a number of developing countries to help local companies gain a foothold in global markets, with the support of effective TSIs. The new agreement brings together two partners with complementary project skills, not only in the conceptual phase but also in the field, in different countries, different export sectors, different technical assistance areas and different stages of implementation. This will provide a strong foundation to create Export Impact for Good. A minimum of five countries will be selected in the programme's inception phase from among existing CBI partner countries. ITC and CBI will bring their expertise to bear across all parts of the export value chain, linking producers to markets and strengthening TSIs in specific sectors. They will also contribute through training and export coaching programmes and in preparing sectoral and country analyses. The two organizations will design their joint programmes to ensure that activities in these countries are sustainable, socially responsible and environmentally sound, complying with international labour standards as well as consumer health, safety and environmental requirements in importing economies.

CBI and ITC jointly deliver on Aid for Trade

ITC has a key role in bringing the voice of the business sector into the discussions on Aid for Trade. The private sector needs to play a prominent role in design, implementation and evaluation of Aid for Trade programmes. The new ITC-CBI partnership will help both institutions make a direct contribution to Aid for Trade, particularly for small businesses, by helping to develop the "soft trade promotion infrastructure" for the development of key export sectors.

The ITC-CBI partnership is unique because it brings together a well-recognized and credible multilateral assistance organisation with a professional bilateral organisation in such a way that they complement each others' strengths. This enables them to develop synergies and jointly deliver Aid for Trade programmes on the ground to help small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) exporters integrate into global supply chains and achieve sustainable export impact. At a time when the international financial crisis, with its resulting global effects, has resulted in loss of incomes, employment and livelihoods across the world, this agreement is timely as it will help small businesses in "sunrise sectors" of developing countries strengthen their competitive edge and to trade their way out of poverty and adversity.

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