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Strengthening Foreign Trade Representation Networks

A capacity building programme to redefine the necessary linkages, priorities, service options and management modes of external trade support networks.

What is it?

The “FTR” programme of ITC supports the implementation of three types of activities:

- **Advisory missions** to assess the strengths and weaknesses of national FTR networks, looking particularly into coordination mechanisms, terms of reference, guidelines, manuals, work processes, templates, information systems and evaluation mechanisms,
- **Training workshops at national level**, in order to learn about tools and methods, share good practices, and upgrade the capacities of individual staff posted abroad. The workshops also involve network supervisors, representatives of major TSIs, representatives of the business sector, and other stakeholders.
- **Regional meetings of FTR network coordinators** for exchange of good practices in the orientation, coordination and management of FTR networks in various countries.

The events and consultancies look deeply into four major areas:

- **Networks:** why and how internal and external trade support networks need to be strongly interconnected; how to tap other network resources; using CRMs and other networking tools
- **Strategies:** linking FTR with the national export strategy; analysing “typical choices” that have to be made, both at country and company level (priority clients, products, markets and services); performing market selection exercises; practice sessions with online market analysis tools
- **Services:** assessing the needs of target users; highlighting comparative advantages of FTR (alerting, verifying, facilitating, lobbying); seeking service specialization between overseas offices (FTR) and headquarters; developing terms of reference for a clear service portfolio.
- **Management:** looking into the daily operation of FTR offices; checklists, tools, formats and templates; managing the network; information systems (incl. CRM); other resources; monitoring and evaluation.

Who is it for?

Trade representatives and their supervisors; diplomats; managers of overseas trade offices. in developing countries, least developed countries, and countries in transition.

The programme looks at the trade representation function. It does not focus on the needs of a particular category of staff. FTR networks are seen as field extensions of Trade Support Institutions. Improved linkages with the business sector and with TSIs is essential for increased performance of FTR networks.

Where is it used?

The new programme started in 2008. National workshops have been recently implemented for Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Egypt (x2), Benin, Indonesia, Algeria (x3), Bangladesh, Côte d'Ivoire. Advisory missions have taken place in Indonesia and in Paraguay. Regional meetings of supervisors of FTR networks have taken place in Ecuador (Dec. 2009) and in Santo Domingo (Nov. 2010, with representatives of 14 Central American & Caribbean countries). Consultancies and training events are customized to the needs of partner organizations.

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