

Trade Competitiveness Section (TCS)

The Commonwealth Secretariat's Trade Competitiveness Section (TCS) of the Trade Division provides technical assistance (TA) to member countries for improving their trade competitiveness in global markets. Recognising the limited size of the domestic market in many member countries, TCS has a strong focus on export development, with interventions targeted at the national level and where requested, escalated to the regional and international level. The Section has been recently given added responsibility for implementing the Commonwealth Secretariat's Trade Finance Facility in their work program.

TC's specific areas of expertise include:

- 1. Market Access** - Interventions in this area of work aim to secure sustainable market access for priority exports. The Section is helping member states in identifying 'New Products and New Markets' and developing schemes around them to diversify their exports. TA is being provided to many countries on targeted action plans for linking into regional and global value chains. The Section is also helping the member states in their multilateral, regional as well bilateral trade negotiations.
- 2. Export Development Strategies** - This initiative supports member countries to design and implement strategic plans for trade competitiveness and export development, underpinned by mechanisms for effective dialogue with governments and non-state actors. National Trade Policies as well as National Export Strategies have been designed for many member states.
- 3. Enhancing the development and exports of services** - Exports of services can provide opportunities to create employment, diversify exports, enhance productivity and empower low skill workers. This area of work allows member governments to benefit from the new opportunities created by globalisation and trade liberalisation.
- 4. Trade Facilitation** - Trade facilitation encompasses the process of identifying and addressing bottlenecks imposed by the weakness in trade related logistics and regulatory regimes that prevent the timely cost effective movement of goods. To deliver this short term outcome, interventions focus on assisting member countries to reduce the costs of doing business and, as signatories to the WTO, to meet their international obligations in this area. Interventions are made through the development of strategic action plans, benchmark studies and reports, and capacity building in trade facilitation.

The Trade Competitiveness Section works in response to the requests received from the Governments or apex institutions and provides technical assistance to address the above competitiveness issues. Areas of expertise include export diversification strategies; gender sensitisation of trade policies; implications of trade agreements and related policy advocacy; implications and compliance to WTO agreements; GATS and Trade in Services Agreements; Mega FTAs like Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA), Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), etc; trade facilitation measures and Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) along with cost of compliance to the TFA. For 2015/16, the Section is providing TA to 14 countries with 19 projects.

Examples (Case Studies): Some of the on-going technical assistance Programmes Provided by the Section are:

Trade Competitiveness Section: Project information

Country	Project
1. Belize	Strengthening Belize's Offshore outsourcing sector; and suggesting reforms needed for conformity with the WTO Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures
2. COMESA	Setting up a Regional Design Studio to overcome the supply side constraint of limited designing capacity
3. Grenada	Designing Grenada's Export Development Strategy
4. India	Technical support for developing India's Global Value Chains and integrating LDCs
5. Jamaica	Jamaica's National Export Strategy 2015-2019
6. Kenya	Development of a Strategic Action Plan to Institutionalise the TIR System in Kenya
7. Kenya	Strengthening the export capacity of selected professional services and establishment of a services 'apex' body
8. Mauritius	Technical assistance for negotiations in TiSA
9. Mozambique	Designing National Trade Policy and National Export Strategy
10. Nigeria	Technical assistance for developing export development strategy for services
11. Nigeria	Policy advocacy in West Africa and EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)
12. Pakistan	Technical assistance for Export Diversification and Developing Exports of services in the context of TiSA
13. Papua New Guinea	National Trade Policy
14. Sierra Leone	'Increasing Sierra Leone's Export Competitiveness through Improved Product Packaging'
15. Sri Lanka	Building capacity of Sri Lanka's Export Credit Insurance Industry
16. St Kitts	Building national capacity on trade negotiations and providing technical support for compliance to WTO TFA

Team Members:

Rashmi Banga

Head of Section

(r.banga@commonwealth.int)

Advisers:

Estella Aryada

(e.aryada@commonwealth.int)

Sujeevan Perera

(s.perera@commonwealth.int)

Yinka Bandele

(y.bandele@commonwealth.int)

Opeyemi Abebe

(o.abebe@commonwealth.int)

Kirk Haywood

(k.haywood@commonwealth.int)

For further details contact:

Luisa Sala

Programme Assistant

(l.sala@commonwealth.int)