



Summary Update of Building an Inclusive East Africa Community (BIEAC) Project: Phase I (Dec.08-Dec.09)

Introduction

Three important parallel developments are currently underway in the East Africa Community (EAC) viz. (a) continuation of the internal process of integration where negotiations for the establishment of an EAC Common Market is underway and slated for implementation in 2010; (b) Tripartite discussions between the EAC, SADC and COMESA aimed at the integration of the three economic blocs; and (c) the negotiations for an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPAs) aimed at formation of a free trade area between the EAC and the European Union (EU). All these processes are taking place without proactive participation of the civil society organisations (CSOs) in the region even when it is clear they pose both challenges and opportunities for the people of East Africa.

The BIEAC-project is being implemented by CUTS in all the five EAC Partner States: Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda over the two year period, 2008-2010. The Project was initiated to empower CSOs in the EAC region to participate more proactively, engage and help in the identification of challenges and opportunities posed by these processes. For instance, the project will aim at helping CSOs to identify challenges relating to;

- the implementation of the internal EAC integration (Customs Union and Common Market);
- agreeing to future terms for cooperation and external trade as may be influenced by the required adjustments to the EAC common external market (CET) and external trade terms such as those relating to EPAs and the region's engagement with SADC and COMESA;
- the possible socio-economic adjustments which may result from the forces of integration forcing redistribution of resources away from some basic social sectors hence the need to support those within sectors which may be impacted negatively; and, lastly,
- the need for equity where it would be desirable to ensure that these developments most effectively contribute to promotion of inclusive developments and poverty reduction in the region, without marginalising some groups/sectors

Successfully tackling these challenges will require a wide range of actions and cooperation across the EAC. In that vein, engaging citizens in the policy dialogue and implementation processes, so as to ensure action responds to their needs and attracts the ownership required to be politically sustainable is a prominent objective in this context.

Phase-I of the Project (Dec 2008-to-Dec 2009)

In its first phase (Dec 2008-Dec 2009) the project has been supporting a range of civil society organisations (CSOs) in the EAC countries to examine the implications of various aspects of the ongoing EPA negotiations between the EAC and the EU on the welfare and livelihood of the people of East Africa, by providing a better understanding of both challenges and opportunities of trade integration. The aim has, therefore, been to support CSOs in their effort to raise the awareness of the general public on relevant issues, gather their concerns and carry out policy advocacy to highlight them and persuade policy makers to take them

into account. This has been made possible through research, awareness raising and policy advocacy workshops over the past one year.

During the phase-I of the BIEAC project, selected research issues have been undertaken in each EAC countries focusing on different areas of the EPA negotiations where there seem to be much controversy and a pro-development solution is desired. The research partners and research themes are as follows:

Partners

1. Burundi:
 - a. Conseil de consolidation des ONG de Développement
2. Kenya :
 - a. CUTS Africa Resource Centre, Nairobi.
3. Rwanda:
 - a. Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development (ACORD) and
 - b. Institute for Policy Analysis and Research (IPAR), Rwanda
4. Tanzania:
 - a. Tanzania Association of NGOs (TANGO) and
 - b. Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF).
5. Uganda:
 - a. Southern and East African Trade Information and Negotiations Institute (SEATINI),
 - b. Development Network of Indigenous Voluntary Associations (DENIVA) and
 - c. African Centre for Trade and Development (ACTADE).

Research Themes

- [Leveraging The Agriculture Sector Through Trade: Opportunities and Challenges in the EC-EAC EPA.](#)
- [The Most Favoured-Nation provision in the EC/EAC Economic Partnership Agreement and its implications](#)
- [Export Taxes and EPAs: Another Policy Tool under Threat from the EC?](#)
- [Trade in Services and EPAs: The Way forward for EAC](#)
- [Standards and Market Access Under EPAs: Implications and Way forward for EAC](#)

These research reports including Briefing Papers and reports of various meetings/workshops have been finalised and uploaded in the websites of CUTS Geneva Resource Centre and CUTS Africa Resource Centre, Nairobi, and presented in several fora bringing together multi-sectoral stakeholders in the various issues of the analysis that have been undertaken¹. A series of Briefing Papers have been prepared which have synthesised the technical research issues and findings into easy-to-read formats; Civil Society Position Papers are also being produced based on the findings of the project research outputs, existing researches and outcomes of the policy advocacy workshops. The project has also been able to hold sustained interaction with the policy makers during the year with a view to establishing an aware and informed CSO constituency in the region.

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¹ See <http://www.cuts-international.org/ARC/Nairobi/BIEAC/index.htm>