



## BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY (BIEAC)

### BACKGROUND & RATIONALE

The East Africa Community (EAC) countries of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda scaled up their integration efforts with the strategic goal of attaining deeper economic, cultural and political union of the region. CUTS

with support from Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) implemented a two-year long project in the five countries to create capacities of the civil society for a better

understanding of both challenges and opportunities of trade integration in order to effectively participate and engage in the, as well as Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) negotiations with the European Union (EU).

Indeed, since its implementation, CSO's in the region have been more actively involved in the EAC integration process, where they are able to monitor progress, create awareness amongst their constituents on the opportunities arising from the integration, and advocate for faster redress of setbacks such as non-tariff measures that often hinder the optimal utilisation of the opportunities arising from the integration.

CSO's in the region have also developed a clear understanding of the issues under negotiation in the EPA with the EU, and have since analysed and made inputs to the negotiations, often making a stand in the interest of their constituents. Their involvement has ensured more awareness amongst stakeholders including the private sector. More knowledge and understanding on the possible impacts of an EPA

has also been generated in the region. This should hopefully result in a balanced and beneficial agreement, which will contribute to the development of the region.

### OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the project was to support a range of CSOs to examine the implications of external trade policies on the welfare and livelihood of people and provide better understanding of both challenges and opportunities of trade integration.

In implementing the project, three core activities of Research; Advocacy; and Networking were undertaken. Outcomes from these activities have enabled the enhanced involvement and engagement of CSO's in the region with regard to both the integration process and EPA negotiations.

Issues examined under the EAC regional integration process, included:

- Regional migration
- Informal cross-border trade
- Tax Policy and regulatory harmonization
- Non-Tariff Barriers
- Accession of Burundi and Rwanda to EAC
- Uganda's draft Competition Law
- Trade opportunities and challenges in the region

Create capacities of the civil society for a better understanding of both challenges and opportunities of trade integration.

Enhanced involvement and engagement of CSO's in the region with regard to both the integration process and EPA negotiations.

The research findings from these studies that were undertaken at the national level were able to inform the CSO's on the ground realities and thereby enhanced their capacity to create awareness amongst their constituents', and to also engage effectively in the debate for the appropriate policies and actions going forward.

Policy options for maximising EPA negotiation outcomes were arrived at after undertaking national research studies on a number of issues that included:

- Revenue implications
- Leveraging the agriculture sector in EAC through the EPA
- Implications of the Most Favoured Nation provision in the EPA
- Trade in Services
- Standards and Market Access in the EPA
- Export Taxes provisions

Findings from these studies have enabled the CSO's in the region to better understand these critical issues under negotiation, and form evidence based positions in advocating for and defending the interest of their constituents.

## PROJECT PARTNERS

The project was implemented by CUTS International in consortium with local partners in Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda, including its sister Office in Nairobi, Kenya. This was an opportunity for the national partners to gain hands knowledge and experience that they have since taken forward in articulating the EAC integration process and the EPA negotiations. Importantly, the project ensured that national research studies were undertaken by local consultants in order to develop their knowledge and understanding of the issues in the integration and EPA negotiation process. These were complimented with CUTS International publications that took an international and regional dimension rather than national dimension.

## OUTCOME

Enhanced CSO involvement and participation in the EAC integration process has seen the creation of bodies such as the Regional Monitoring Mechanism for non-tariff barriers that are actively ensuring implementations of Member States' obligations.

On the EPA front, **CSOs have been able to ensure that contentious issues are first agreed before concluding the agreement**, hence its delayed finalisation.

At the regional level, the **CSOs were able to organise themselves into an EAC Civil Society Network on Economic Issues (EACSONEI)**, a forum through which they are able to interact with the EAC Secretariat and make inputs on behalf of their constituents.

From the outset, the project recognised the unique role of CSO's in using their networks and outreach to the various stakeholders. The target was therefore to ensure that they were equipped with the necessary knowledge and capacity to successfully spread awareness and advocate for the appropriate policies in both the EAC integration process and the EPA negotiations.

Ensuring the capacity of CSO's in order to make use of their networks and outreach to the various stakeholders.

The project was able to complement existing literature on how to achieve an inclusive EAC, as well as negotiating for a pro-development EPA. Among the **key success factors identified were sustainability of the Political will, ensuring participation of all stakeholders in order to attain collective responsibility, and ownership of the process.** Advocacy and awareness rising would also contribute to equitable and proportionate benefits from the process, a result that would ensure perpetual longevity of the community.

At the conclusion of the project, both the beneficiaries and project donors recognised the need for taking the integration process and support for regional bilateral negotiations further; a need that CUTS international is pursuing to ensure sustainability not only in the EAC but in other regions as well.