

# Services Policy-Making and Negotiations: Involving Civil Society for Public Interest and Consumer Welfare



This study is published as part of the “Support to Enhance Development of Trade in Services Negotiations” initiative jointly undertaken by ILEAP, CUTS International Geneva and the University of Sussex’s CARIS. It aims to contribute to the increased and more effective participation of Least Developed, Low and Lower-Middle Income Countries and their Regional Economic Communities in multilateral, regional and bilateral services trade negotiations.

The initiative promotes understanding among policy makers, regulators and negotiators about their services sectors and the role that trade negotiations can play in pursuing their strategic interests therein.

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#### Funding support



This publication should be cited as:

MUKIIBI J., DEBORNES L., JEYAKUMAR S. (2015). 'Services Policy-Making & Negotiations: Involving Civil Society for Public Interest and Consumer Welfare'. Toronto, Geneva and Brighton: ILEAP, CUTS International Geneva and CARIS.

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# Abbreviations

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BOT	Board of Trade
CNI	Confederation of Nepalese Industries
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CSA	Civil Society Adviser
CSD	Civil Society Dialogue
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CUTS	Consumer Unity & Trust Society
CUTS CITEE	CUTS Centre for International Trade, Economics and Environment
DCC	Development Coordinating Committee
DDCC	District Development Coordinating Committee
DG	Directorate General
DTIS	Diagnostic Trade Integration Study
EIF	Enhanced Integrated Framework
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreement
EU	European Union
FEATS	Fostering Equity and Accountability in the Trading System
FNCCI	Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry
IITC	Inter-Institutional Trade Committee
ITC	International Trade Centre
JITAP	Joint Integrated Trade Assistance Programme
LDC	Least Developing Country
LIC	Low Income Country
LMIC	Lower Middle Income Country
MCTI	Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MTS	Multilateral Trading System
NBF	Nepal Business Forum
NCC	Nepal Credit & Commerce Bank
NDCC	National Development Coordinating Committee
NDTPF	Uganda National Development and Trade Policy Forum

<b>NECTRADE</b>	Nepal Enhanced Capacities for Trade and Development
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>NHPA</b>	Nepal Handmade Paper Association's
<b>NPIA</b>	Nepal Pashmina Industries Association
<b>NSA</b>	Non-State Actor
<b>NSC</b>	National Steering Committee
<b>NWGT</b>	National Working Group on Trade
<b>PDCC</b>	Provincial Development Coordinating Committee
<b>PPD</b>	Public-Private Dialogue
<b>SADC</b>	Southern Africa Development Community
<b>SAFIT</b>	South Asia Forum for International Trade
<b>SAG</b>	Sectoral Advisory Group
<b>SAWTEE</b>	South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment
<b>TISA</b>	Trade in Services Agreement
<b>UNCTAD</b>	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
<b>WTO</b>	World Trade Organization

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# Foreword

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Services and services trade can play a central role in promoting sustainable development, supporting inclusive economic growth, and reducing poverty in modern economies. However, LDCs, LICs, and LMICs continue to face challenges in catalysing or sustaining progress across this diverse range of economic activities. With respect to trade policy and related negotiations, services have become an increasingly visible feature of discussions - domestically, regionally, as well as at the bilateral and multilateral levels.

A number of challenges impacting services trade negotiations and policy-making have been identified however. Many lack access to reliable services trade data on which to base analysis and decision-making, and skills for processing and analysing existing services trade data to underpin conclusions. Ineffective interactions between stakeholders to support decision-making - within government, and between the government and the private sector, civil society, and other non-state actors - is also a major challenge.

Against this backdrop, ILEAP, CUTS International Geneva and the University of Sussex's CARIS have partnered to undertake a series of interventions that seek to contribute to the increased and more effective participation of LDCs, LICs, LMICs and RECs in multilateral, regional and bilateral services trade negotiations.

With funding support from the UK Trade Advocacy Fund, a set of studies, toolkits and trainings are developed to assist these countries in increasing their participation in services trade. Target beneficiaries range from negotiators, policymakers, regulators, statistical officers and various non-state actors.

In this context, this case study on "Services Policy-Making and Negotiations: Involving Civil Society for Public Interest and Consumer Welfare" examines how effectively different low and lower-middle income countries have leveraged civil society participation in policy-making and negotiations related to trade in services. Civil Society Organizations are a key pillar of the institutional trade in services landscape today, and their inclusive participation can be an invaluable asset for the government when properly designed. In particular, CSOs can be key partners in informing decisions and building the necessary broad-base ownership over new policies and negotiated outcomes.



# Introduction

The value of trade in services is continuously increasing in the global trade exchanges, and as such, services represent a critical development opportunity for the set of countries categorized as Least Developed Countries (LDCs); Low Income Countries (LICs) and Lower Middle Income Countries (LMICs) generally. To ensure that this opportunity is optimally harnessed in a sustainable manner that also promotes consumer welfare, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have an important role to play in the design and implementation of trade in services' policies, as well as in trade in services' negotiation mechanisms, be it national, bilateral, regional or at the multilateral level.

The role of CSOs is a key pillar of the institutional policy-making and negotiation landscape today and therefore governments have the responsibility to include them in the important processes dealing with trade in services. In fact, inclusive participation of stakeholders including CSOs in trade in services policy formulation, negotiations and implementation of resulting policies would potentially spur sustainable development and poverty reduction. This is so due to CSO's wider outreach and the ownership that comes with it.

Moreover, from a country perspective, the nature of the services sector is such that it involves a range of national policy objectives that include prudential regulation, universal access, the preservation of cultural diversity, and the maintenance of high professional standards among others.<sup>1</sup> This, in addition to the fact that trade in services agreements are complex initiatives dealing with issues that affect people's way of life, CSOs are concerned that such rules resulting from negotiated agreements and policies are well balanced and do not disrupt or negatively affect the delivery of basic services such as education, health, and utilities. Creating space and opportunities for dialogue between CSOs and the government in the

trade in services policy formulation, negotiations and implementation of outcomes is therefore necessary in order to address these legitimate public concerns.

This case study examines select countries scenarios' in order to identify requisite institutional mechanisms for effective involvement of CSOs, such as consumer organizations, in public-private dialogue (PPD) around trade in services. In the study, PPD mechanisms refer to formal and informal structures and activities through which governmental bodies engage CSOs on trade issues, specifically on trade in services. Policy and negotiating mechanisms on trade in services in the selected countries are analysed, as well as how, when, and to what extent the CSOs are involved in the design and implementation of those policies and negotiating positions at the national, bilateral, regional and multilateral level. Selection of the countries, and the analysis therein, is based on previous work that inter-alia examined inclusiveness of non-state actors including CSOs in trade policy and related initiatives. This was under two CUTS International projects, Fostering Equity and Accountability in the Trading System (FEATS) and the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) sPokes project; the analysis identifies existing mechanisms (if any) for CSOs participation in trade in services, in order to address the following issues:

- What are the mechanisms in place for CSOs to participate/promote trade in services?
- Where they exist, are they functional, and if so how effectively?
- What are the challenges that hinder CSOs effective participation in trade in services policy formulation and /or negotiations?

The case study, through comparative analysis of different institutional mechanisms and involvement of

<sup>1</sup> World Bank (2009). *Negotiating Trade in Services: a Practical Guide to Developing Countries* International Trade Department

CSOs in trade policy formulation and negotiations, aims at:

- Drawing lessons and identifying best practices towards enhancing CSOs' awareness of effective institutional mechanisms to promote trade in services in both policy-making and services negotiations; and
- Helping negotiators, policy makers and CSOs, alongside other key stakeholders, to strengthen services trade negotiations and policy-making.

From the outset, it should be noted that in most developing countries, and in particular LDCs, LICs, and LMICs, there is a general absence of mechanisms specific to trade in services policy formulation and/or

negotiations, which usually occurs as a sub-set of broader trade policy mechanisms. This could be attributed to the fact that traditionally trade policy was viewed in terms of goods, starting with the evolution of rules governing international trade, which commenced with trade in goods (under the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs) and only later evolved to also cover trade in services (under the General Agreement on Trade in Services). Trade in services remains a complex area for many stakeholders including CSOs, which in part explains their limited involvement. Existing mechanisms established in the more general framework of trade policy formulation and negotiations are therefore relevant for inclusion of CSOs, and should be further enhanced to provide entry points in the area of trade in services.

## Section 1:

# Significance of CSO Involvement in Trade in Services Mechanisms

The nature and complexity of trade in services underpin the need for CSOs effective involvement. This arises from a number of factors among which are: the intangible nature of services and the difficulty of ascertaining a sector's contribution to production and thereby economic consequences of alternative policies; the diversity of activities encompassed in a sector; and the diversity of market failures affecting services, all of which calls for active cooperation of stakeholders. Studies show that services' liberalization, if well managed, has the potential to promote more competitiveness, which would consequently spur a country's economic performance with far reaching benefits exceeding those from say agriculture and manufacturing sectors alone.<sup>2</sup>

It is widely acknowledged that liberalizing services markets, in particular key enabling sectors such as telecommunications, transportation, energy and

financial services can spur economic development. However for such benefits to be realised, there is a need for a broad and complex set of policies, regulatory measures, institutional mechanisms and involvement of all relevant stakeholders including CSOs. Undertaking the necessary reforms, informed by assessing the domestic scenarios, is a prerequisite to meaningful liberalization and therein lies the significance of CSOs to not only contribute to the trade in services' policy agenda, but also to play an oversight role in ensuring safety nets for the wider public interests.<sup>3</sup>

From the foregoing, for a country to meaningfully liberalise its services' sector towards sustainable development, there is a need for gathering significant knowledge, which can optimally be attained through proper channels of communication with key

<sup>2</sup> Hoekman and Mattoo (2009), and Hoekman (2006)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid



stakeholders including CSOs, academia, private sector associations, and all relevant government ministries and institutions.

CSOs play a critical role in ensuring that consumer interests are protected by advocating for policies that promote competitiveness (i.e. avoiding monopolies) and transparency in the services sector. In addition, CSOs could contribute to services sector growth by identifying and advocating for strategic offensive and defensive positions that governments should assume during trade in services negotiations. The specific roles would include the following:

- Lobbying government and regulators for fair and appropriate policies;
- Complementing and assisting government in more accurately assessing sector readiness towards liberalization, given CSOs closer proximity to the constituencies more likely to be affected by market opening; and

- Raising awareness of the private sector and other relevant stakeholders on trade in services policies, ongoing negotiations, and outcomes, so as to promote utilization of opportunities arising.<sup>4</sup>

The need for effective CSOs engagement in the development and implementation of trade policies is premised on the rationale that policy frameworks rooted in the needs of a country's society as a whole will establish a sense of legitimacy, which should ultimately lead to the realisation of the development goals sought. Since trade in services is usually treated as a sub-set of the entire trade machinery, the analysis in the country scenarios takes into account the broader trade policy mechanisms in order to assess CSOs involvement therein, so as to draw lessons and arrive at recommendations and/or best practices for establishment of successful CSO mechanisms in promoting trade in services.

## Section 2:

# Country Scenarios

## 1. The Case of Zambia

In Zambia, CSOs' role in trade policy processes is mainly in the form of awareness-raising and information sharing; research and analysis; lobbying and advocacy; and capacity building<sup>5</sup>.

With the adoption of more open policies in 1990's private sector organisations, and CSOs, now play an increasingly significant role in national policy making and implementation processes in Zambia. Indeed, CSOs policy-oriented research and analysis generates knowledge that complements the research made by

the government and other players. These studies help the government in its action and eventual trade policy, including in negotiations.

In Zambia lobbying and advocacy are at the core of CSOs activities and this is mainly done through roundtables meetings. Generally, CSOs' strategy for lobbying and advocacy is based on their participation in stakeholder consultation mechanisms, for instance through the National Working Group on Trade (NWGT). A number of CSOs also undertake capacity building activities on trade and related issues as a means of promoting development and poverty alleviation. By undertaking these types of activities,

4 Supra footnote 1

5 CUTS International, Geneva (2009). Towards More Inclusive Trade Policy Making: Process and Role of Stakeholders in Select African Countries.

CSOs are able to effectively contribute to the trade policy making processes including on trade in services<sup>6</sup>.

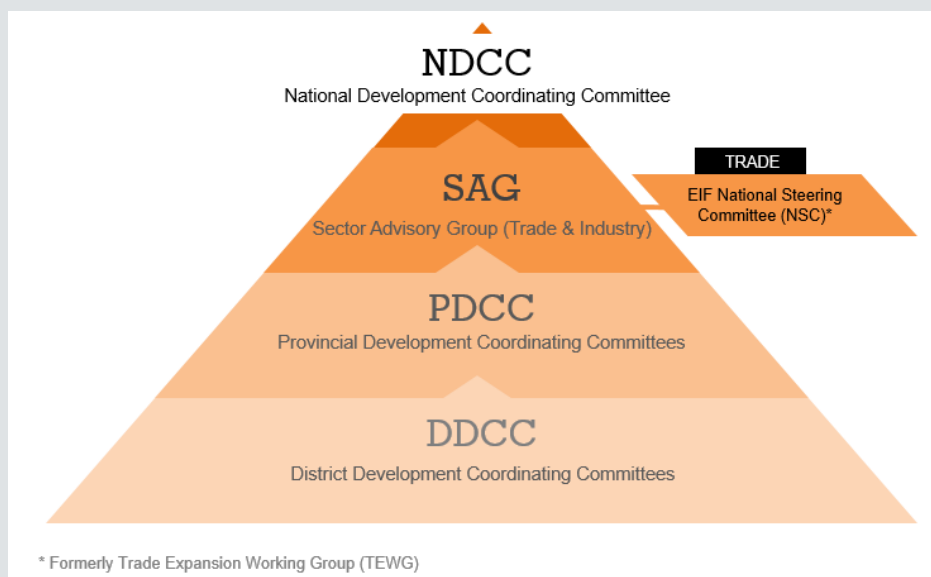
## 1.1. Trade policy Mechanisms in Zambia

Trade policy formulation, monitoring and implementation in Zambia is the main responsibility of the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry (MCTI), which also oversees the formal mechanisms such as the Development Coordination Committee (DCC) system through which non state actors (NSAs)

including CSOs can participate in trade and related initiatives.

The DCC was established at the national, provincial and district levels and has the following objectives: (i) Effective co-ordination between sector ministries and departments, donors, NGOs, and other agents of development, and the council; (ii) Effective monitoring and reporting on the overall developmental efforts and; (iii) Establishing mechanisms for ensuring the government’s responsiveness to local needs in service delivery.<sup>7</sup> The diagramme below illustrates the main trade policy mechanism in Zambia.

**FIGURE 1** TRADE POLICY MECHANISMS IN ZAMBIA



Source: CUTS International, Geneva (2014)

## 1.2. The EIF National Steering Committee

### Functioning

The Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) National Steering Committee (NSC) is a subset of the Sectoral Advisory Group (SAG) on Trade and Industry and is another important avenue for participation of NSAs in trade policy since it meets quarterly and has NSA representatives in its membership. For instance, stakeholders, including CSOs, participated in the DTIS update validation workshop of February, 2014 in

6 CUTS International, Geneva (2009). Towards More Inclusive Trade Policy Making: Process and Role of Stakeholders in Select African Countries.

7 JICA (2007). A Review of the FNDD, PDP and DDP Development Processes. URL: [http://jica-ri.jica.go.jp/IFIC\\_and\\_JBICI-Studies/english/publications/reports/study/topical/gov/pdf/001.pdf](http://jica-ri.jica.go.jp/IFIC_and_JBICI-Studies/english/publications/reports/study/topical/gov/pdf/001.pdf)

Zambia. This was a consultative meeting in which the main points of discussion were Zambia's export promotion strategy and trade reforms as well as products that should be prioritized.

## Civil society participation

CSOs are among the stakeholders that constitute the system schemed above. It is provided that District (DDCC) and Provincial (PDCC) meetings should be held quarterly and are platforms to coordinate planning, budgeting, implementation, reporting, monitoring and evaluation at provincial and district levels. Outcomes of these local consultations should feed into national planning through the National Sector Advisory Group Conference and the National Development Coordinating Committee (NDCC). While these ideally should be held every July and coordinated by the Ministry of Finance (MOF) and Cabinet Office respectively, in reality this is not always the case, with consultative meetings at times lapsing for long periods of time.

The National Working Group on Trade (NWGT) constitutes another critical forum in Zambia where state and non-state actors engage in consultations regarding all trade-related issues. The consultation group consists of members of the private sector, CSOs and the government. The NWGT has established various sub-committees and working groups that are mandated to discuss trade and related issues in their respective areas of competence. These sub-committees and groups are organized around various trade agreements and negotiations as well as sectors.

- In the first category are those that deal with the World Trade Organisation (WTO), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and Cotonou/Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the European Union (EU).
- The second category includes sector and issue specific sub-committees and working groups dealing with agriculture, services, intellectual

property rights, trade facilitation, and donor programmes.

Outcomes from the NWGT feed into the formulation of negotiating positions and development of trade strategies by the MCTI. NWGT is a useful mechanism through which stakeholders including CSOs are able to engage in the national trade policy processes including on trade in services.

## 1.3. Challenges hindering effective functioning of trade policy mechanisms

Despite existence of the above mechanism through which CSOs can participate in the trade policy processes, including promotion of trade in services, there are several prevailing challenges that hinder their effective functionality and these include the following:<sup>8</sup>

### The multiplicity of sub-committees and working groups

Under both the NDCC and NWGT there are different sub-committees and working groups that often target the same people, which makes the plethora of meetings very difficult for CSOs to regularly and consistently attend. It is generally felt that reducing the number of working groups and sub-committees into fewer settings around main sectors such as services would enhance their efficiency and facilitate more effective participation of important stakeholders including CSOs<sup>9</sup>.

### Lack of consultation at grassroots level

Under the NDCC system, district & provincial officials do not regularly undertake consultations at the grassroots on trade issues; this is either because they are not aware of their responsibility to do so or because of capacity constraints. Moreover, it often the case that when such consultations take place, inputs made at district and provincial levels are not transmitted to

8 CUTS International, Geneva (2014). Zambia – Trade Mainstreaming for Development: A Roadmap for Engaging NSAs.

9 WTO, Integrated Framework (2004). "Diagnostic Trade Integration Study: Technical Mission to Zambia".

higher levels (SAG and NDCC), which discourages participants.<sup>10</sup>

## Inclusive representation

Participation of CSOs in consultative meetings is through their representatives. Taking into account all the views and interests of the different CSOs on a particular issue can prove quite challenging and requires finding the right balance. It is common practice to delegate to juniors to attend important consultative meetings, yet such individuals often lack the capacity to effectively represent the needs and views of their constituencies.

Even where the CSOs are involved in the consultative process, they are often not involved in the decision-making process. There is need to ensure that consultative mechanisms provide for a wider variety of CSOs depending on the nature of the issues under deliberation, and that such CSOs have a say in the decisions arrived at.

## Lack of CSOs knowledge and capacities on trade

Another critical challenge is the lack of knowledge on trade issues, more especially trade in services, amongst majority of CSOs. The main cause of this deficiency is the lack of resources and capacity to train and retain technical personnel. The need for building capacity along with the ability to retain resourceful human resource is quite evident in Zambia.<sup>11</sup>

The issue of capacity with regards to trade in services extends to government as well, where a high rate of staff turnover is a major hindrance to effectively reach out to stakeholders such as CSOs in the development of policies on trade in services. Stakeholders also feel that there is still a lot more focus on trade in commodities and that the potential of trade in services is yet to be harnessed through dedicated policy prescriptions including through negotiations of trade in services agreements at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels.<sup>12</sup>

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10 CUTS International, Geneva (2014), Zambia – Trade Mainstreaming for Development: A Roadmap for Engaging NSAs.

11 CUTS International, Geneva (2014), Zambia – EIF sPokes National Report

In the past Zambia had a dedicated working group on trade in services that had been initiated under the Joint Integrated Trade Assistance Programme (JITAP), implemented by ITC, UNCTAD and WTO in partnership with beneficiary countries. Unfortunately, it was not sustained beyond the project funding. Reinvigorating such an initiative would boost CSOs important role in promoting trade in services including consumer welfare.<sup>13</sup>

## THE EXAMPLE OF JITAP

The programme began in 1996 and continued in a second phase from February 2003 until December 2007. Among the 16 African countries, including 10 LDCs, benefiting from JITAP, was Zambia.

JITAP built sustainable capacities at the national level to assist partner countries in using trade as an engine for growth and human development. The goal was to establish a trade policy process that helped each country identify its trade interests within the framework of its overall development and poverty reduction strategies. The process involved a wide range of stakeholders including parliaments, the private sector, the media, academia and civil society. Special attention was paid to create synergies with the Integrated Framework.

By design, JITAP built or strengthened human, institutional and entrepreneurial capacities in five main areas: (i) Trade negotiations, implementation of WTO agreements and related trade policy formulation; (ii) Provision of reliable technical information on MTS, with attention to standards and quality requirements; (iii) Development of the national knowledge base on MTS; (iv) Development of goods, commodities and services policy frameworks and sectoral strategies and; (v) Networking of the institutional and human capacities built in each country.<sup>14</sup>

12 CUTS International, Geneva (2014), Zambia – EIF sPokes National Report

13 ITC. International Trade Forum Magazine. URL : <http://www.tradeforum.org/JITAP/>

14 Ibid.

## 2. The Case of Nepal

The government of Nepal has an open policy with regard to CSOs and private sector engagement in trade policy formulation; this extends to seeking their inputs on the development of negotiating positions. However in doing so the government has to take into consideration other factors such as societal social issues and therefore may not always deliver on the specific demands presented.

While not exhaustive, Nepal does present a basic framework for CSO participation in trade policy and negotiations, which can be regarded as a valid starting point in order to further identify the best practises to be implemented specifically for trade in services. Similarly, the relatively widespread recognition of the benefits public-private cooperation on trade policy elicits helps to foster an environment that encourages the creation of more of these institutional mechanisms. In fact, CSOs involvement in Nepal's trade sector played a significant role in Nepal's accession to the World Trade Organization wherein one CSO South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE) was given the responsibility of preparing the country's schedule of commitments in services.

Nepal's bid for accession was a rocky one - political turmoil at home led to uncertainty about the prospects of ratification after Nepal had been offered membership to the WTO. Ratification was eventually successful in March of 2004, largely through the advocacy efforts of CSOs such as SAWTEE, leading Nepal to be the first Least Developed Country (LDC) to successfully negotiate its accession to the WTO.<sup>15</sup>

### 2.1. Trade Policy Mechanisms in Nepal

In Nepal, it is the Ministry of Commerce and Supply that is primarily responsible for trade policy formulation, monitoring, and implementation. Nepal has created several institutions that serve to facilitate the public-private linkage with the goal of encouraging stakeholders, including CSOs to contribute to trade policy. Some of the mechanisms are established by

<sup>15</sup> P. R. Rajkarnikar. "Nepal: The Role of an NGO in Support of Accession". WTO Website.

legislation, among which is the Trade Policy Act 2009. These mechanisms include, inter alia, the Nepal Enhanced Capacities for Trade and Development (NECTRADE); the Nepal Business Forum (NBF); the Nepal Trade and Transport Facilitation Committee; and the Trade Advisory Committee. All of these institutions seek to bring together public and private representatives including CSOs to ensure more inclusivity in the process of trade policy formulation and implementation.

### NECTRADE

As a Tier 1 Project of Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) Nepal, Nepal Enhanced Capacities for Trade and Development (NECTRADE) Project is implemented by the MoCS to facilitate EIF activities in Nepal. NECTRADE Project is designed to strengthen national arrangements of the EIF to enhance Nepal's ownership of Trade Related Technical Assistance and maximize the benefits that the country can derive from participation in international trading system/WTO. The overall goal of the Tier 1 project is to ultimately ensure faster growth of the country, alleviation of poverty through creation of jobs and enhanced sustainability of trade development efforts resulting to greater overall benefit to Nepalese populace through enhanced global integration, trade development and proper positioning of the country.<sup>16</sup>

### Board of Trade

Board of Trade (BOT) has been set up under the chairs of Minister for Commerce and Supplies to gear up trade and industry and provide necessary guidelines

### Nepal Business Forum

Nepal Business Forum (NBF), Nepal's first-ever public-private business forum began its journey in 2010 with the aim of improving the business environment in Nepal through better interaction between the business community and government officials. NBF aims to create a business environment conducive to growth and development.

<sup>16</sup> NECTRADE. Introduction to the EIF in Nepal. URL: <http://eifnepal.gov.np/page/61/16>

## The Trade Advisory Committee

A Trade Advisory Committee is in place, consisting of former Commerce Secretaries and private sector leaders, to provide policy feedback on concurrent trade and transit related issues.

## The Nepal Trade and Transport Facilitation Committee

It is a coordination body under the chairmanship of the secretary in the ministry of commerce of the government of Nepal. The committee comprises of 18 members from the government, service providers and traders. It is also a consultative body for proposing facilitation recommendations to the government and private sector institutions concerned.

## 2.2. CSOs in the Nepal Business Forum

The Nepal Business Forum (NBF) offers the broadest mechanism through which CSOs are able to promote the interests of their constituencies through different working groups. This is so because of its sector-wide coverage that includes trade in services such as tourism, telecommunication, information and communication technology, financial services and others.

NBF is the country's first national platform for public-private dialogue established to deliberate on important trade, investment, and climate issues and recommend measures to government. Poverty alleviation, employment-centric growth, agriculture, infrastructure building and social development are all key priorities for overcoming economic challenges and creating a business-enabling environment in Nepal. Chaired by the Prime Minister, NBF has 75 members including senior government policymakers, representatives from the private sector, civil society members, economists, academicians and several development partners.

NBF's structure and functions were developed after careful deliberation through a consultative process including representatives from the private sector, government and CSOs.

NBF is constituted by nine Working Groups: (i) Business Environment, Labour Relations and Industrial Security; (ii) Export Promotion and Trade Facilitation; (iii) Financial, Monetary and Insurance Affair; (iv) Industrial Investment Promotion; (v) Infrastructure; (vi) Tourism; (vii) Women Entrepreneurship Development; (viii) Eastern Regional Business Forum; (ix) and Foreign Direct Investment Working Group.<sup>17</sup>

A major concern of stakeholders in Nepal, especially CSOs is the failure of negotiated positions and inputs to be taken on board. CSOs feel that although PPD mechanisms through which they can interact with government are in place, implementation of agreed policies and programmes remains very disappointing.”<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless Nepal has succeeded in laying the basic framework for fostering PPD, through which CSOs can successfully promote public interest and consumer welfare of trade in services.

It is well recognised by the government in Nepal that CSOs need to be motivated in order to be more effectively involved in PPD including that of trade in services. Such motivation stems in large part from knowledge that well balanced trade policies and the benefits of trade can be useful development tools. In this regard, Nepal has developed some measures through which pertinent information is channelled to all relevant actors. For instance during the period 2012-2013, Nepal undertook several “trade and development awareness raising programs”, which saw positive results in the capacities of stakeholders including CSOs to appreciate trade policies and their roles therein.

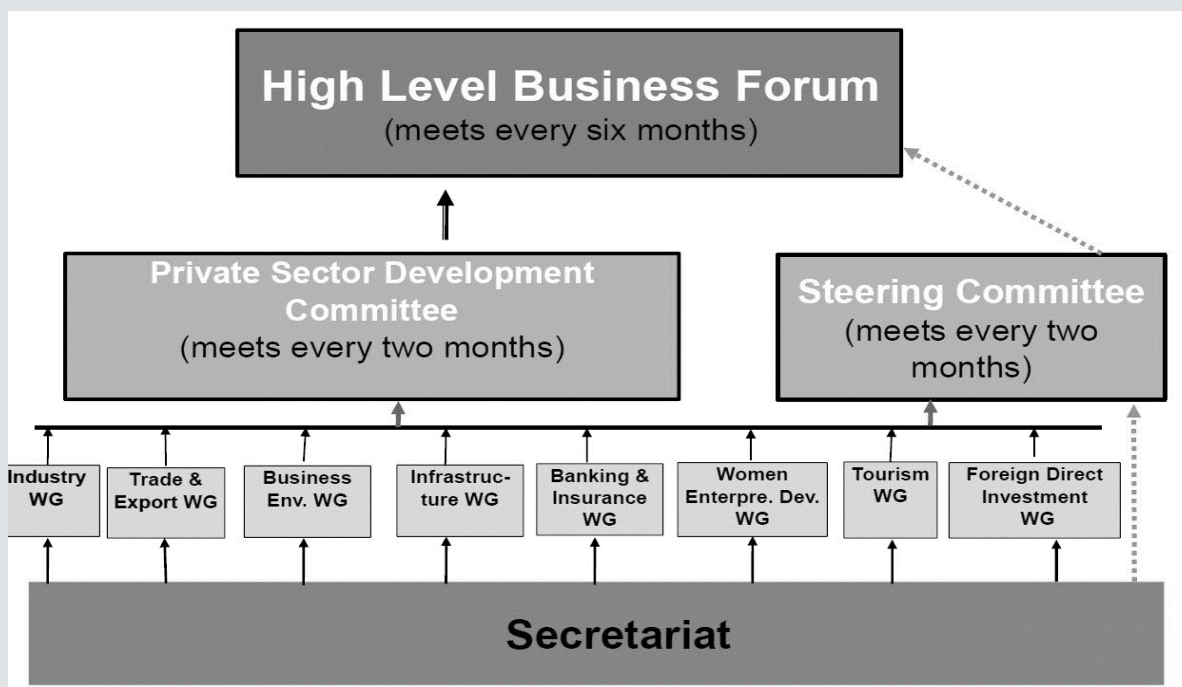
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17 NBF Website. URL: <http://www.nepalbusinessforum.org>

18 CUTS International, Geneva (2014), EIF Spokes project - Nepal Country Report.



FIGURE 2 STRUCTURE OF THE NEPAL BUSINESS FORUM



Source: Nepal Business Forum

The awareness raising programmes were through tools such as a regular newsletter updating stakeholders about trade related PPD activities in Nepal, an up-to-dated, easily navigable website developed by NECTRADE, and the dissemination of calendars that contained information on trade and related PPD issues to stakeholders at the federal and district levels<sup>19</sup>. Similar initiatives dedicated to trade in services would enhance CSOs’ effective participation in promoting trade in services.

Improved knowledge dissemination is particularly important considering that uninformed CSO representation in PPD consultations and negotiation processes is a recurrent issue that often hinders their effective participation and promotion of their constituent’s interests. The experience in Nepal is that

in some instances junior staffs of CSOs were often sent to represent their organization at important PPD forums and yet they lacked decision making authority, this was redressed by establishing a minimum level of seniority for CSO representatives in such forums.

The above interventions resulted in several successful engagements wherein stakeholders including CSOs in Nepal have effectively influenced trade policy through participation in PPD forums. One such example is the Nepal Handmade Paper Association’s (NHPA) success in securing a 2% incentive scheme for their sector, while also securing government loans to promote paper exports.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, the Nepal Pashmina Industries Association (NPIA) has been able to oversee and coordinate the implementation of a project that helped facilitate public-private linkages. The main

19 Ibid.

20 CUTS International, Geneva (2014), EIF Spokes project - Nepal Country Report.

“implementation entity” of the project is the ITC, which has consulted regularly with the NPJA regarding policy direction and implementation.<sup>21</sup> Such a strategy, if extended to trade in services, would likely yield similar outcomes.

Nepal has also seen increasing CSO participation in its commercial sector. These CSOs focus primarily on consumer advocacy and awareness campaigns, helping to ensure that consumer rights are being respected. There are two designated forums designed to hold producers accountable for consumer rights – the Forum for the Protection of Public Interest (PRO PUBLIC), and the Forum for Protection of Consumer Rights – Nepal. PRO PUBLIC is involved in matters ranging from dispute resolution and litigation, to enhancing the capacities of grassroots CSOs.<sup>22</sup> As this phenomenon of CSO involvement in policy negotiation grows and extends across different sectors, it bodes well for the extension of mechanisms into the trade in services sector.

However, there are diverse impediments to optimal CSO involvement in trade policy and negotiations in Nepal, such as the government’s reliance on the three main apex bodies in making trade and related decisions – the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI), the Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI), and the Nepal Credit & Commerce Bank (NCC). While these bodies are no doubt important, there is a substantial need to increase vertical integration in the CSO community, and cultivate ties with grassroots and local-level, small-scale CSOs. As these apex bodies are not all-inclusive, and sometimes do not consult with their member organizations often, they should not be relied upon as the sole non-state representative in negotiations since their size and membership composition makes it difficult for them to adequately incorporate the needs and concerns of their constituency.<sup>23</sup>

While there are many existing institutional mechanisms in place to facilitate CSO participation in the process of trade policy development and implementation, there are still many issues the Nepalese government has to address before attaining

the optimal level of cooperation between state and non-state actors such as CSOs, in the context of trade policy and attendant negotiations. That said, the existing framework, and the examples of PPD forums in multiple sectors, bodes well for the extension of these mechanisms to trade in services specifically.

### 3. The Case of Uganda

The main entry point for CSOs participation in trade policy formulation and implementation, including negotiations, in Uganda is the Inter-Institutional Trade Committee (IITC) that was set up in 1998 with the following mandate: (i) to coordinate the formulation and implementation of trade policy relating to the implementation of WTO obligations in the country and to prepare for the WTO negotiations; (ii) to backstop Uganda’s negotiators at the WTO; (iii) to provide a platform for the formulation of policy relating to the utilisation of export opportunities; and to assist in sensitising relevant stakeholders about the WTO. The IITC was established to deal with mainly WTO-related issues, but later evolved to covering trade and related issues at national, bilateral and regional level.

IITC is constituted by stakeholders that include: relevant government ministries, private sector and the civil society. The IITC mandate covers both the functions of inter-ministerial coordination, and dialogue and consultation with other stakeholders. It operates as the single, undisputed coordination and dialogue institution for all trade policy matters.<sup>24</sup> The IITC has the following four sub-committees each having a membership of 20 with the provision of one person being eligible for membership of more than one sub-committee:

- Sub-committee on the WTO
- Sub-committee on the Cotonou Agreement
- Sub-committee on Regional and Bilateral Arrangements
- Sub-committee on Domestic Initiatives

21 Ibid

22 Boston University Center for Finance, Law, and Policy

23 CUTS International, Geneva (2014), EIF Spokes project - Nepal Country Report.

24 CUTS International, Geneva (2009). Towards More Inclusive Trade Policy Making: Process and Role of Stakeholders in Select African Countries.

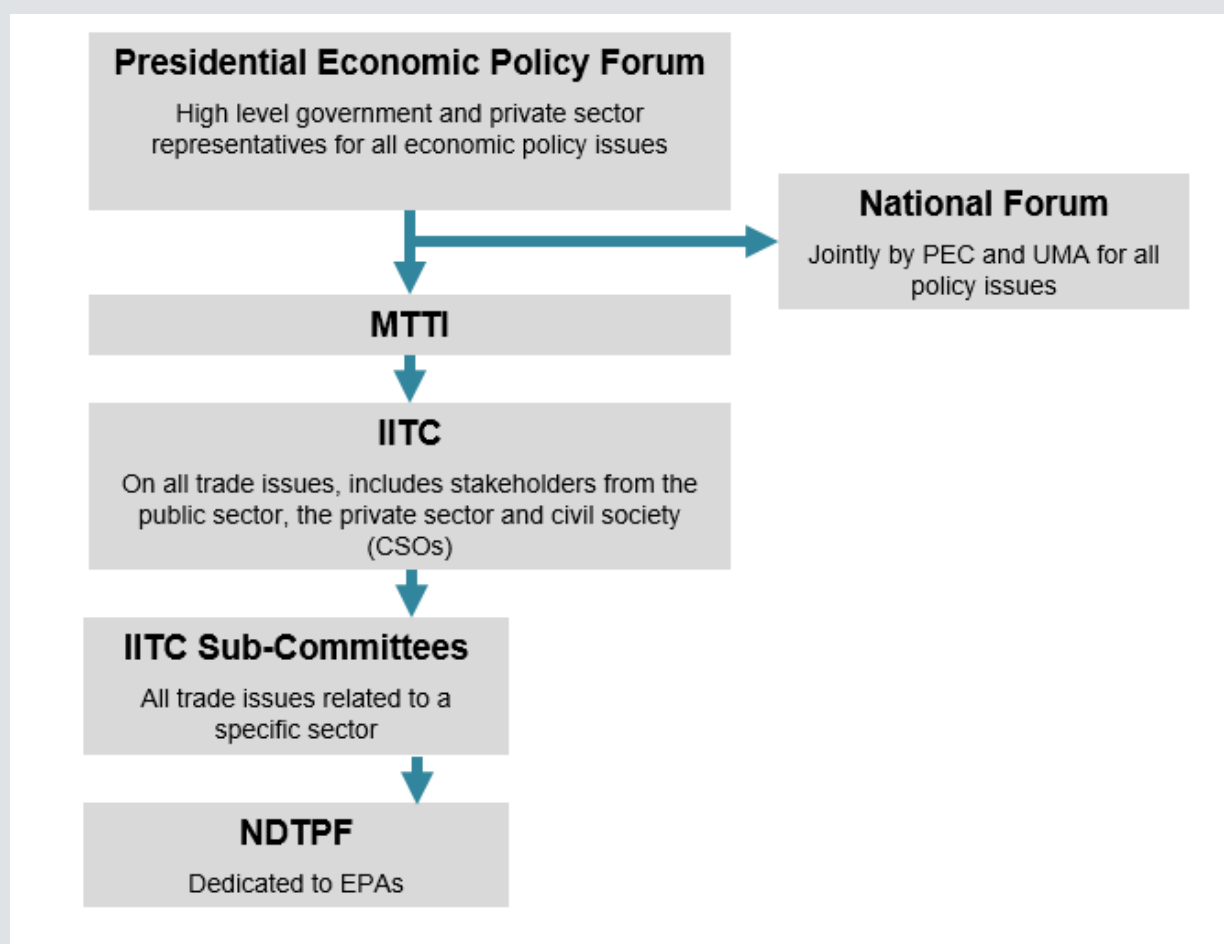
The IITC provides for all stakeholders meetings to be convened at least twice a year, while the above subject specific sub-committees were meant to meet once a month. While IITC meetings have been held regularly, the same has not been the case for sub-committee meetings.

### 3.1. The Trade Policy Mechanisms in Uganda

The IITC sub-committee on the Cotonou agreement established the Uganda National Development and Trade Policy Forum (NDTPF) to coordinate the

development of its negotiating position for the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the European Union (EU). This initiative was funded by the EU and took into account the IITC model of pooling all stakeholders including CSOs in the discussion of the country's position with regard to the EPA negotiations. Unfortunately this initiative did not go beyond the EU funding that lasted till 2007. There are calls for government to fund this mechanism (and the IITC in general that was also initiated under donor funding) in order to avoid the situation of ceasing activity due to funding issues, and more so being dependent on sources of funding by the country one is negotiating with.<sup>25</sup>

**FIGURE 3** TRADE POLICY CONSULTATIVE MECHANISMS



Source: CUTS International (2011)

25 CUTS International, Geneva (2009). Towards More Inclusive Trade Policy Making: Process and Role of Stakeholders in Select African Countries.

## 3.2. Challenges for Effective Functioning in Uganda

A number of challenges are faced by CSOs in the trade policy making process related to both their own lack of capacity and organisation, as well as the flaws in the process. These include<sup>26</sup>:

### Limited trust between governmental stakeholders and CSOs

There is limited trust between the government and CSOs, since the later are often viewed as activists out to critic government initiatives however beneficial they may be to the wider community. Never the less, with the CSOs increasing reliance on evidence backed argumentation and advice; trust building is evolving in the right direction.

### Limited outreach to grassroots' stakeholders

There is generally limited outreach by CSOs to rural areas and the grassroots, due to mostly limited financial and human resources, which hinders inputs from the critical mass of stakeholders with interest in the trade policy and negotiating outcomes including that on trade in services.

### Lack of CSOs knowledge and capacity

IITC as a trade policy and negotiating mechanism is very effective with regard to trade in goods where members including CSOs and other stakeholders are quite knowledgeable and actively participate, however with regard to trade in services this tends to be the reverse. Trade in services remains a complex area for stakeholders more especially the CSOs who are yet to understand and appreciate the dynamics therein and how they play out to their constituencies. This lack of capacity was recently exposed at an event organized to deliberate on the Trade in Services Agreement (TISA), wherein CSOs contribution was quite limited due to their lack of sufficient knowledge on the subject.<sup>27</sup>

According to a prominent CSO in Uganda, their lack of active pursuance and participation in trade in services national and international policies is due to limited knowledge on the subject matter. Well as they very much appreciate the significance of trade in services and the role they could play in promoting it for the benefit of their constituencies, they are unable to articulate the issues involved therein. Consequently, the CSOs are not proactive in terms of being involved in trade in services trade policy agenda and the negotiations, since, by facing a complex matter; they are not able to adequately help in formulating national negotiating positions.

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26 CUTS International, Geneva (2009). Towards More Inclusive Trade Policy Making: Process and Role of Stakeholders in Select African Countries.

27 Interview with South Eastern Trade Negotiation Institute-Uganda (SEATINI) a leading trade CSO in Uganda

## Section 3:

# Insights from Asia and the European Union

The case studies analyzed indicate that although trade policy mechanisms through which CSO can promote trade in services policies, including negotiations exist in most countries, much more needs to be done for them to be optimally utilized. The experience of CSOs in South Asia and the model adopted by EU could be quite instructive in this regard.

## 4. South Asia: The SAFIT Project

Although in India CSOs are quite active in government trade policy processes including for trade in services, whereby the International trade committee within the department of Commerce regularly consults CSOs, such consultations are largely informal. Never the less, being a strong democratic nation, the views and inputs of CSOs are often taken on board. Besides CSOs and think-tanks are often invited to participate in trade negotiations.

Recognizing the need for CSOs effective involvement in trade policy and negotiations, including that for trade in services; a leading Indian based CSO, CUTS Centre for International Trade and Economics (CUTS CITEE) initiated the South Asia Forum for International Trade (SAFIT) project, which aimed at establishing and strengthening linkages between CSOs, and research institutes in government's trade policy processes and negotiations. The multi-country project that covers Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka focuses on a number of issues, among which is trade in services negotiations at the WTO. Through this project CSOs from the respective countries have been

able to more effectively contribute to the ongoing WTO negotiations including on trade in services.

CUTS CITEE and its partners under the SAFIT project share experiences of participating in trade policy processes including trade in services, in their respective countries, in order to learn from each other.<sup>28</sup>

The project has the following inter-related objectives<sup>29</sup>:

- Facilitate cross-fertilization of experiences and lessons learnt on international trade including trade in services and national development between South Asian Countries and to establish linkage between the CSOs and research institutions in order to enhance the consultation process while developing appropriate policy responses.
- Strengthen the capacity of the South Asian countries on new emerging issues including their role in trade in services
- Establish a platform to facilitate in preparing a common position for South Asian countries during the Doha Round for the benefit of the poor, with a special focus on women, with inputs from the grassroots.
- Engage different stakeholders (NGOs, trade bodies, industry bodies, trade unions, WTO experts, women group, etc.) and present their concerns on each of the issues covered in Doha negotiations.
- Addressing livelihood concerns while developing negotiating positions, thus influencing the

28 CUTS International. SAFT Project web site. URL : <http://www.cuts-international.org/implementation.htm>

29 CUTS International. SAFT I, II, III Project web sites. URL : <http://www.cuts-international.org/safit.htm>, <http://www.cuts->

[international.org/safit-II.htm](http://www.cuts-international.org/safit-II.htm), <http://www.cuts-citee.org/SAFIT-III/index.htm>

process of making the Doha Round of trade negotiations a truly development round.

- Rectifying democratic deficits in economic governance in South Asian countries, so that the process of policy-making, which would include trade in services, becomes more people-oriented as opposed to current top-down approach.

Diverse activities have been implemented through this multi-phase project, to generate negotiating inputs and assist the negotiators and policy makers while taking into account the position of CSOs (including NGOs, business bodies, trade unions, women groups, particularly those working on gender and trade linkages) on trade issues. The activities include the following:

## 4.1. Research

In-depth research was undertaken in all project countries with a special focus on domestic preparedness towards further liberalization, including that of trade in services. Findings of the studies resulted in specific recommendations, which have been the basis of advocacy and lobbying of relevant government institutions to ensure that policy options of positions of governments reflect these important situations.

## 4.2. National and Regional Consultations

SAFIT project activities included consultations in the project countries and at regional level. This provided a dialogue and discussion forum to relevant actors on issues relating to the Doha Round of negotiations. Trade policy officials, representatives of trade promotion bodies, research institutions, WTO experts, NGOs, trade unions, women groups, industry bodies and media persons were invited to take part in these consultations. Research partners worked in close cooperation with NGO partners in organizing these meetings.

Country specific declarations/recommendations and a common declaration on South Asian perspectives, resulting from the multi-stakeholder consultations were

generated. The declarations are also used for doing advocacy with trade negotiators, trade policy officials, business bodies, NGOs and civil society actors for wider dissemination and greater help to countries in South Asia to better understand their concerns.

According to the project appraisal<sup>30</sup>, the project improved CSOs understanding and knowledge on trade issues especially on trade in services that had previously not been well appreciated. A model in the form of a forum in which CSOs, trade actors and governments interact has been successfully set up and is very active within the project countries. However, this platform to be really effective needs to become a formal consultation mechanism to allow the different stakeholders to concretely and coherently influence trade in services' policies and negotiations. A formal representation of the CSOs at governmental level through a recognised representative body is critical according to one of the project implementers working for CUTS CITEE.

The SAFIT project demonstrates that CSOs can successfully initiate programmes for building capacity towards more effective participation in trade policy processes and negotiations, including for trade in services.

## 5. The European Union Mechanism

The European Union (EU) has developed very clear mechanisms for effective dialogue and consultations with CSOs regarding the formulation of trade policy including trade in services. The mechanism was institutionalized through the *Civil Society Dialogue* (CSD), which is a platform for exchanging views on EU trade policy and related issues. It includes consumer, development, environmental, social and human rights non-governmental, organisations, think tanks, research institutes, chambers of commerce, trade unions and employers' and professional associations, as well as the European Economic and Social Committee<sup>31</sup>.

The CSD collaborates with the *Directorate General Trade* (DG Trade), which is the European organ

30 <http://www.cuts-international.org/pdf/SAFIT-I-Appraisal.pdf>

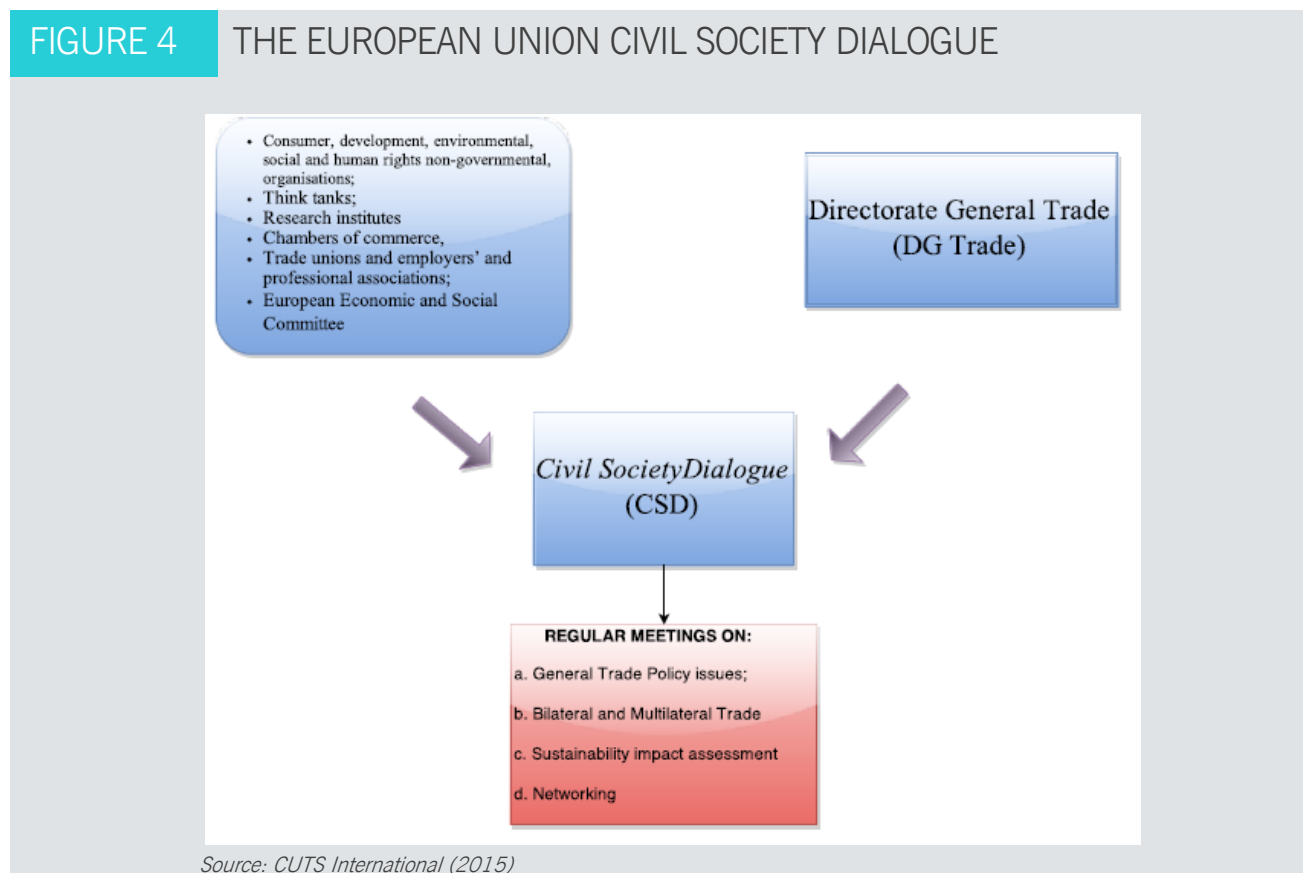
31 Andrea M Ewart (2009). The Role of Civil Society in Shaping Trade Policy. FOCAL Research Paper, December 2009, p. 10



responsible for implementing trade policy and briefing the European Parliament on the overall conduct of EU trading actions.

The CSD – DG Trade collaboration is strengthened through regular and structured meetings which permit CSOs to present their views on trade issues including

on trade in services. This is complemented by other DG Trade meetings where CSOs are routinely invited, which has promoted transparency and accountability. The interaction is illustrated in the figure below:



The CSD through which CSOs in the EU participate in trade policy, has the mandate to cover the following issues:<sup>32</sup>

- General meetings on trade policy issues
- Meetings on bilateral and multilateral trade negotiations
- Sustainability impact assessment meetings
- Meetings with the commissioner/director-general for trade
- Contact group meetings

## 5.1. Key principles

The above consultations are based on a number of principles the EU when consulting stakeholders, including CSOs, to ensure a coherent and effective participation/engagement of those parties <sup>33</sup> and include the following:

<sup>32</sup> Evaluation of DG TRADE's Civil Society Dialogue in order to assess its effectiveness, efficiency and relevance, Coffrey International Development, 22 July 2014

<sup>33</sup> European Commission (2002), Towards a reinforced culture of consultation and dialogue – General principles and minimum standards for consultation of interested parties by the Commission.

## Participation

The Commission is committed to an inclusive approach when developing and implementing EU policies, which means consulting as widely as possible on major policy initiatives. This applies, in particular, in the context of legislative proposals.

## Openness and accountability

The Commission believes that the processes of administration and policy-making must be visible to the outside world if they are to be understood and have credibility. This is particularly true of the consultation process, which acts as the primary interface with interests in society.

## Effectiveness

To be effective, consultation must start as early as possible. Interested parties should therefore be involved in the development of a policy at a stage where they can still have an impact on the formulation of the main aims, methods of delivery, performance indicators and, where appropriate, the initial outlines of that policy. Consultation at more than one stage may be required.

## Coherence

The Commission will include in its consultation processes mechanisms for feedback, evaluation and review. This will be ensured through appropriate co-ordination and reporting in the context of the Commission's "better law-making" activities

## 5.2. Civil Society: examples of successful participation

As a result of the above principles and mechanisms in place, CSOs in the EU are able to effectively participate and contribute to the trade policy processes, including

negotiations, which is illustrated by some concrete examples below:

- During the ninth WTO Ministerial Conference, which took place in Bali, a group of civil society advisers (CSAs) formed part of DG Trade's delegation to this high-level meeting. The CSAs included representatives from the European Economic and Social Committee, business associations, the agricultural sector and non-governmental organisations from different fields. In the run-up to and during the conference, the CSD team provided organisational support on the spot as well as background information on other side events and briefing sessions with high-level officials<sup>34</sup>
- The proposal in favour of CSOs registered in the CSD for trade to publish their position papers on trade issues on DG Trade's civil society webpage on the Europa website was successfully adopted.
- To support more inclusive participation in CSD meetings, DG Trade, within the limits of available resources, is able to cover the travel expenses of civil society representatives registered in the CSD database and based outside Brussels in one of the Member States of the EU
- Creation of the Transparency Register as a fundamental requirement to participate in the CSD for trade
- CSO participation in Trade Sustainability Impact Assessment (Trade SIA), which is a policy tool to help the Commission to assess the economic, social and environmental implications of a trade negotiation before it is concluded. It is carried out during the negotiations and helps to integrate sustainability into trade policy and to involve comprehensive consultation of stakeholders<sup>35</sup>. For example, CSD took part in the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA) on the 5th May 2014, and was in charge of writing the Draft Inception Report.

The EU, mechanism has fully integrated CSOs in trade policy processes including for trade in services where they play significant roles that are also legally provided for as discussed above. Although much more

34 European Commission. DG Trade Dialogues. URL: <http://trade.ec.europa.eu/civilsoc/index.cfm>

35 European Commission (2014). Civil society dialogue on trade, Summary of activities in 2013. Annual Report 2013, Publications Office of the European Union.

advanced, the EU experience can provide lessons for developing and least developed countries, wherein certain principles that provide for and encourage CSOs

participation in trade in services can be adopted and mutually implemented, so as to bring on board these important stakeholders in trade in services.

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## Section 4:

# Recommendations

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As the case studies have demonstrated, there are a variety of options through which CSO mechanisms could be enhanced and/or established for the promotion of public interest and consumer welfare on trade in services. These include through trade forums, working groups, advisory committees, etc. However, in order to be effective and incisive, most of these mechanisms, once in place, should ideally be governed by a set of principles/rules defining their formal structures and procedures, such as agenda setting, participation criteria and chairperson identification. If these mechanisms are designed in an inclusive manner providing for effective participation of CSOs, they become a powerful instrument through which sustainable trade policies including for trade in services, can be generated.

Therefore, to ensure that trade in services' policies and negotiations contribute to consumer welfare and sustainable development, the mere implementation of the above-mentioned mechanisms is not sufficient: consultations with CSOs and within CSOs and their constituents should be inclusive and valuable.

The main principles in achieving this include the following:

### **Ensure inclusive, accountable, and effective representation**

In order to guarantee effective mechanisms it is crucial, that representatives of CSOs have adequate knowledge and access to information regarding the trade in services' issues at stake. In this regard, participation criteria in such mechanisms should take into account the competence and expertise of CSO representatives interacting with the government. In addition, it is

important that representatives of CSOs participating in the PPD have the mandate of their constituencies, and to whom they should be accountable for the contributions they make in the PPD.

To ensure wider inclusiveness, national PPD initiatives should have linkages up to the local level allowing for grassroots' participation and inputs to the final outcomes, which would allow for synergies between local and national actors.

### **Provide for flexibility**

Although PPD mechanisms are constituted by limited membership, there should be flexibility to co-opt representatives of sectors where an agenda issue is of direct concern to them. For instance in preparation of policies for services sectors such as tourism should ensure that representation of the relevant players in the sector is provided for, even where they would ordinarily be represented on the committee by their apex body. In Nepal, this is already the practice, and it has been found beneficial to provide for direct representation of sectors for which policies are targeted.

### **Keep institutional memory**

In order to guarantee continuity and smooth operation of consultative mechanisms in the long term, it is important to ensure that the membership diligently maintain records of meetings, decisions and activities undertaken. This way, change in representatives would allow for new members to update themselves quickly and effectively (due to this institutional memory) and avoid working from scratch. This could also mitigate the challenge of high staff turnover as a result of brain drain as experienced in Zambia.

In addition to the above principles, an effective CSO mechanism that would effectively promote public awareness on trade in services requires the development of internal structures that allow for participation of all relevant stakeholders. This includes developing the capacity to understand stakeholders interests and needs as well as managerial and communication know-how.

Well as there is no generic skills-set that guarantees successful CSO promotion of trade in services, given that stakeholders in the sector have varying interests, there are some basic set of skills and characteristics that cut across. These include strong communication and analytical capacities as well as negotiation and managerial skills. More specifically, this would entail the following:

- Setting performance standards in terms of desirable outcomes
- Enhancing expertise in the subject matter (trade in services and the attendant rules, regulations and scope)
- Assessing skills gaps and determining priorities for corrective action.

The table below introduces suitable formats of mechanisms through CSOs can promote public awareness of trade in services. The suggested formats could also be used by in preparing for consultative meetings at governmental level on trade in service.

## RECOMMENDED FORMATS

### OF EFFECTIVE CONSULTATIVE MECHANISMS OF CSOS ON TRADE IN SERVICES

#### ● Focus group

Well suited for testing ideas or brainstorming with selected members representing a particular interest group or sector. Typically, one focus group would be limited to no more than 10 participants to allow everybody to speak and interact with others.

#### ● Workshop

Public meetings, typically requiring at least one full day. A workshop normally starts with presentations, before the audience is divided into smaller interactive working groups tasked with clearly defined responsibilities.

#### ● Policy dialogue

Well suited to PPDs, especially when it comes to formulating solutions to politically controversial or technically complex issues. Such meetings usually aim to exchange information about a particular issue and build consensus between a range of State and Non-State Actors such as CSOs.

#### ● Public consultation

Meetings that serve as a feedback channel and a communication bridge between the public and the government, and increases public ownership by allowing CSOs to be involved throughout the design and implementation process of a policy or programme.

#### ● Roundtable


Usually more informal than policy dialogues or workshops, and are normally used as a means to brainstorm and enrich the debate on an issue rather than reaching consensus.

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## Support to Enhance Development of Trade in Services Negotiations

With support from the UK Trade Advocacy Fund, ILEAP, CUTS International Geneva and the University of Sussex's CARIS are undertaking a series of interventions that seek to contribute to the increased and more effective participation of LDCs, LICs, LMICs and RECs in multilateral, regional and bilateral services trade negotiations.

Through the studies, toolkits and training to be delivered, the envisaged results aim to assist these stakeholders in increasing their participation in services trade.

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