

SADC

**Strengthening Quality Infrastructure for
Trade Enhancement and Consumer Protection**

Summary of the Evaluation Report

Project Data

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PTB Working Group:	Q.54
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This report was elaborated by independent evaluators for the PTB. It reflects exclusively the evaluators' opinions and conclusions.

Project Description

A mid-term evaluation of the joint SADC – PTB project “Strengthening Quality Infrastructure (QI) for trade enhancement and consumer protection in SADC” took place at the end of 2012. An inception report was elaborated subsequent to a preparatory meeting at PTB headquarters in October 2012 and transmitted to the partners in the SADC region. Discussions with the SADC Secretariat, the QI structures of SADC and other stakeholders took place between 25 November and 1 December 2012 in Botswana and South Africa. Even though the very limited time did not allow for a complete assessment of the project’s activities, the evaluators were able to get a good feel for its requirements.

The *Southern African Development Community* (SADC) was founded in the early 80s. Initially, it followed objectives of political cooperation and infrastructure development. These were later complemented by those of developing a common market.

The countries of the SADC region are at very different stages of development. Eight of the 15 member states are „*least developed countries*“, having to cope with substantial challenges of poverty, high population growth and low levels of competitiveness. The comparatively high rates of economic growth during the last 10 years – partly from a very low basis – give reason for hope that the preconditions for regional trade will be improving.

Internal trade within SADC amounts to only 10 percent of the total of exports. It grows at a significantly slower pace than trade with non-African countries. However, opportunities for trade in the region look promising. They are limited in particular by low levels of infrastructure development as well as non-tariff barriers to trade (NTBs). Technical barriers to trade (TBT), caused by different technical regulations (i.e. standards required by law) form part of NTBs. Reducing these is the objective of the TBT Annex to the SADC Trade Protocol and an essential goal of effective QI, which at the same time has to protect consumers against products of doubtful quality.

QI is commonly referred to as SQAM (*Standards, Quality Assurance, Accreditation and Metrology*) in Southern Africa. The Directorate for Trade, Investment, Finance and Industry (TIFI) of the SADC-Secretariat plays an important role in improving QI.

The SQAM Expert Group of SADC is responsible for coordinating QI and the work of altogether six SQAM Structures (for accreditation, legal metrology, industrial and scientific metrology, standards, technical regulation and TBTs). Elected representatives of the SADC member states preside over these structures; their

secretariats (regional coordinators) are equally elected and at present administered by South African SQAM institutions.

Several donors support the development of QI in the SADC region. The SADC-PTB operates in close coordination with the ongoing BMZ/GIZ programme of strengthening the capacities of the SADC Secretariat. It is building on the results of a comprehensive QI programme of the EU, which phased out in 2010.

Assessment of the project

Status of the change process

The analysis of the project's impact chain reveals that the context between activities, outputs and outcomes/impact is clear and plausible. The project has set for itself reasonable and adequately demanding goals, the attainment of which appears assured in view of the familiarity of PTB with the development of QI in the region. In order to measure its impacts, the project makes use of existing *Monitoring Scheme*, which are administered by the comprehensive GIZ-programme and other donors

The project has four components, directed at capacity development of the TIFI Directorate in the area of QI/TBT, capacity enhancement of the QI structures, the international recognition of the QI-Structures as well as the participation of the private sector.

The project can be credited with high **effectiveness**. The project objectives are clear (even if some indicators could have been formulated with more precision). They were attained, except for the pursued participation of the private sector (which is disappointingly low in other regional projects as well). The project is built on well anchored structures. The good cooperation with the developed QI structures in South Africa leads to synergy gains. The project approach is flexible, but following accepted rules.

The capacities of the QI experts of the TIFI Directorates were significantly strengthened within the first component. Their contributions to regional QI increased, for instance with regard to the harmonisation of standards.

Highly competent advice and training was extended in order to enhance the capacities of regional QI structures. These were demand oriented and encompassed all areas of QI (industrial metrology, accreditation, standards, legal metrology) as well as the review of the the TBT Annex of the SADC Trade Protocol. The discussions

held during the mid-term review revealed very positive perceptions of the project's achievements.

With regard to international recognition, the outputs of the project referred to important substances for the region (chemical and microbiological parameters of water as well as building materials). The project facilitated the participation of SADC SQAM structures in regional and international professional associations, the successful results of which were presented during an international conference for proficiency testing.

Participation of the private sector proved to be a difficult objective to follow. The project made efforts of strengthening in particular the participation of the private sector in the committees for TBTs and technical regulations; however, hardly any progress was made.

Impacts of the project reveal themselves in improved consumer protection through better performing QI structures. It was plausibly explained that the close feedback to decision makers of the SADC Secretariat of information won through the TBT monitoring scheme contributed to systematically reducing non-tariff barriers. Such impacts cannot be quantified, though.

Having created awareness of decision makers in governments and the private sector for QI is an important impact, which may ultimately contribute to sufficient means being made available for QI. This would facilitate further economic development. The evaluation team understands that good progress has been made in this regard.

The **sustainability** of the project is high because of the commitment of the SADC Secretariat, which is making substantial resources available. This is enhanced by the interest of South Africa in effective QI in a region with which it has close trade and economic ties.

The PTB project fulfils the criteria of sustainable development to a high degree, because its interventions are directed towards both institutional and political decision making levels, because it follows social (consumer protection) as well as economic (trade enhancement) objectives and because it strongly pursues participation in planning and implementation.

Causes and success factors for the observed results and change processes

The project's **relevance** is very high, because free trade and regional integration are core objectives of SADC and of the German development cooperation. The project is

also highly relevant for its target groups. QI contributes to economic growth and hence to poverty alleviation.

The project works without a permanent project structure and expatriate experts, which keeps costs low and thus underpins **efficiency**. Intensive coordination with the GIZ programme enhances the efficient implementation of measures, so does the professional support of project activities through the SADC SQAM structures, which again are supported through the intensive cooperation with South African structures in terms of organisation and strategy. The high level of efficiency of service delivery is being achieved through demand orientation and the employment of experts of high competence. The project coordinates its interventions intensively with programmes of other donors, avoiding duplication and promoting complementarities.

The project is clearly oriented towards impacts. Its **strategy** is closely coordinated with those of its partners. Capacity Development is an integral part of this strategy. The good cooperation between all project partners (though there is concern regarding the cooperation with the private sector) are the result of joint strategy development with the political partner, joint operational planning, cooperation at macro and meso levels as well as making use of possible synergy effects with GIZ and other donors.

All project partners and the PTB are represented in a common **steering** committee, which takes all project related decisions. The private sector is invited as important partner, but does not make use of this opportunity to a satisfying degree. **Processes** are taking place at institutional and political decision making levels. The processes and roles for delivering project outputs are clearly defined; the instruments applied are in line with the respective roles of the participants.

Learning and **innovation** are playing an important role in the project. Activities are comprehensively documented and displayed on the partners' web-pages. Operational plans are being adjusted to changing framework conditions. The adjustment of strategies follows the possibilities of cooperation and the information collected through monitoring. Within their organisations, staff is passing on knowledge it acquired through capacity development.

Learning processes and learning experience

Three main lessons may be learned from the project:

1. The involvement of the private sector at regional level – for the dialogue on QI and the participation in the elaboration of technical regulations and the reduction of TBTs – is difficult because of the significant efforts that representatives of the private sector must make in order to be able to take part.
2. The presence of a particularly strong partner within a community such as SADC should be seen positively. South Africa's high potential in SADC should be made use of for regional development projects.
3. The implementation of the TBT Annex and the harmonisation of technical regulations is a lengthy process. The project reacted correctly to this, in that it reinforced its capacity-development measures with regard to political advice and support of SQAM structures in the member states.

Further learning alludes to the benefits resulting from the representation of the project through a regional professional working part time and being paid by PTB. The permanent direct contact leads to more flexibility and higher efficiency of project implementation. This contact – if possible with the same person – should be maintained. Staff of adequate competence is often not easy to find in the region.

Recommendations

The implementation of a subsequent project, as has been intended in the initial planning, is supported. It can be expected that the positive results can be continued by a follow-up project, leading to higher levels of sustainability.

Emphasis should be placed on the following areas:

- Continuation of capacity development measures for selected areas of QI, with the objective of supporting SADC member states in developing a QI that is appropriate to their actual requirements. Measures should be adequate and appropriate, and make use of regional transfer of knowledge (South-South cooperation).
- Continuation of the strategic orientation towards a regional business environment that facilitates trade and reduces TBTs. In order to better consider the interests of the private sector, practical possibilities should be found and applied to detect these, even without the private sector's physical participation in events.
- The follow-up project should develop an exit route. For this reason coordination with South Africa with regard to sustainably securing results of QI development in the SADC region is necessary.

- Formulation of clear milestones and the definition of a clear point of destination for a follow-up project. Precise indicators and practical monitoring systems should be developed for this purpose.

The new module objective is suggested to be:
SADC-QI has improved in line with the TBT Annex

Indicators should measure progress in relation to:

- The implementation of the TBT Annex
- The competencies of the SADC Secretariat with regard to QI
- The satisfaction of the private sector with regard to the QI system

Three instead of four components are proposed. These should refer to:

- Further capacity development of the SQAM group within the TIFI Directorate of the SADC Secretariat
- Strengthening of the SQAM structures at regional and national levels
- Support of international recognition