

EXTERNAL EVALUATION

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“Establishment of a demand-oriented and regionally harmonized Quality Infrastructure in the Caribbean“ - (RQI-4)

Country | Region: CARIFORUM countries (Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and the Dominican Republic)

Project number: 2012.2063.1/ PTB-Nr.: 95080

Implementation period: November 2012 – December 2015

Executing agency: Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt (PTB)

Implementing partner: CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ)

PTB | Working group: Q.53 Technical Cooperation with Latin America and the Caribbean

PTB | Project coordinator: Mr. Carl Felix Wolff

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PRELIMINARY REMARKS

Acknowledgements

The evaluation team would like to express their considerable gratitude to everybody who, unhesitatingly, assisted us in this evaluation, with their advice, comments, information, expertise, and physical help. We have tried to list all the meetings we had in annex 4, but we have probably missed some of you, for which we apologise.

We realise that you all helped us to the very best of your ability, often at times when you were under pressure dealing with your day to day work, and so it may be invidious to single any person or organisation out, but, without the help of PTB Headquarters and the CROSQ Secretariat in Barbados the team would have had much more difficulty with meetings, logistics, and general understanding of the issues that we were evaluating.

Throughout the field mission to the Caribbean, we encountered nothing but generosity and considerable cooperation.

Terminology

RQI-4 - The report uses the abbreviation ROI-4 (Regional Quality Infrastructure) as synonym for the present PTB project “Establishment of a demand-oriented and regionally harmonized Quality Infrastructure in the Caribbean“ which is covered by this evaluation (2012 – 2015). The abbreviation is widely used by the stakeholders in the Caribbean to identify the project and seen in a line with the predecessor project RQI-3 (2009 – 2011) and two earlier projects implemented in parallel by PTB, RQI-2 and RQI-1 (2008 – 2011), in the CARICOM region.

1. Project summary

The German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) has funded two successive PTB projects supporting the strengthening and harmonization of the regional Quality Infrastructure (QI) in the Caribbean in the period 2009 - 2011 and in the period 2012 - 2015 (follow-on project). The German contribution for each project amounted to 1 Million EURO. The projects' implementing partner was in both cases the CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ) as well as its stakeholders at national level which are the National Bureaus of Standards (NSBs), the National Accreditation Bodies (NABs) and other QI institutions. The direct target groups were therefore the CROSQ Secretariat, the NSBs and other QI institutions in the region, which received technical and organisational assistance. Additionally, private sector actors have been involved in e.g. value chain related exercises (CALIDENA instrument application) and other activities. The final target groups of both projects are however the small and medium enterprises (access to cost-effective QI services) and the consumers in the Caribbean region (consumer protection). Both projects carry the title "Establishment of a demand-oriented and regionally harmonized Quality Infrastructure in the Caribbean" and have been implemented as self-standing sub-regional modules in the context of the regional PTB projects "Establishment of a demand-oriented and regionally harmonised Quality Infrastructure in the Andean countries, the Caribbean and Central America".

The present evaluation is an external final project evaluation and covers the self-standing module with the title "Establishment of a demand-oriented and regionally harmonized Quality Infrastructure in the Caribbean" (RQI-4), covering the implementation period November 2012 – December 2015 (Project-Nr.: 2012.2063.1 /PTB-Nr. 95080).

Project framework data

The Caribbean sub-region is composed of many small scale economies which are challenged by the continuous liberalisation of world markets and the ever increasing quality requirements of these markets. One essential corner stone to maintain and increase competitiveness (in terms of access to export markets but also in terms of imports) and to gain the best from negotiated international trade agreements (e.g. European Partnership Agreement – EPA¹) is a functioning and reliable Quality Infrastructure available to the economical actors in the Caribbean region.

The core problem, which is addressed by the project under evaluation, is that the regional offer for QI services is not yet sufficiently developed to respond to the demands of the economic actors in terms of quality and quantity of services. In this context, the limited size of the individual economies in the region clearly calls for concerted activities, the sharing of existing QI capacities in the region and strong

¹ Economic Partnership Agreement with the European Union

service networks coordination in order to realise the optimum gain from the world market trade liberalization for the region.

The project's support focuses directly on the essential challenges and short comings highlighted above and provides substantial assistance in the following fields:

- Improvement of the knowledge of the Caribbean QI institutions about the demand for services in the region;
- Strengthening of the technical and entrepreneurial competence of the QI institutions (and their regional organisation CROSQ);
- Strengthening of the capability of the QI networks / CROSQ to coordinate the range of services at regional level.

As a consequence, the project operated at various levels of the region's QI system in a holistic approach (individual support to NSBs, support of regional QI networks, and at the level of the CROSQ Secretariat) with the objective to support the establishment of a demand-oriented and regionally harmonised Quality Infrastructure.

The concrete action lines implemented by RQI-4 indicating the approaches, main activities and the proportional resources allocated by action line are presented in the table below:

ID	Action line	Approaches	Main activities	RQI-4 Resources allocation
1	CALIDENA exercises	Exchange fora with selected value chains	First round: 4 national value chains Second round: 4 national value chains (selected from 8 applications)	32 single consultancy assignments 331 expert days in total 52 % of project resources (based on expert days)
2	Capacity Building	Training and consultancy services targeted on QI institutes and regional specialised	Majority of support directed to workshops, trainings and individual consulting in metrology (mass, volume, temperature, dimension)	13 single consultancy assignments 94 expert days in total 15 % of

		networks		project resources (based on expert days)
3	Regional Dialogue and Coordination Fora	Consultancy support directed to CROSQ Technical Officers (TOs), organisation of bi-national fora and support to networks	Majority of support directed to CROSQ capacity building (TOs) and strengthening of regional networks	22 single consultancy assignments / activities 210 expert days in total 33 % of project resources (based on expert days)

Evaluation and methodology

The evaluation of the RQI-4 project was carried out by a team of two consultants, led by a development generalist (Mr. Michael Kunze) and a technical QI expert (Mr. Mauro Rivadeneira) during the period 3 August until 12 November 2015. The evaluation has involved an intensive desk phase with documentary studies and preparatory interviews with key-stakeholders (CROSQ Management and PTB core consultants) and a comprehensive data collection phase in the Caribbean region, covering Barbados, Dominica, Trinidad & Tobago, the Dominican Republic and Jamaica. During the field mission, more than 65 individual interviews with representatives from about 30 organisations and individuals have been carried out, altogether forming a solid body of information for the evaluation.

2. Overall assessment of the project

The evaluation concludes that the project, in terms of DAC² evaluation criteria assessment was successful.

Relevance - Overall, the project can be called relevant and based on actual needs of key-stakeholders in the project region. The project directly addresses the challenges identified by the regional QI strategy and most activities are executed based on requests / proposals of regional QI actors (in all action lines). This finding was unanimously confirmed by all interviewed stakeholders during the evaluation.

² Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

Effectiveness - One driver and main reason for the satisfactory effectiveness of RQI-4 overall is that PTB has continuously worked in the Andean Region and the Caribbean Region for decades now. There is a deep trust in PTB as worldwide renown QI institution (in terms of the highest available technical level but also in terms of adaptability of consulting services to local / regional needs and challenges). It is presumed by key-stakeholders that PTB comes without a geo-political agenda and always concentrates on most effective and efficient support to QI actors. This reputation bears a high responsibility but at the same time facilitates the access and reach of projects carried out. Overall, the project successfully addressed one challenge persistent in the Caribbean region which is the still moderate understanding of QI importance through supporting CROSQ and NSBs advocating effectively at governmental and line Ministry level – thus paving the ground for a more integrated and harmonized regional QI (although the evaluation comes to the conclusion that this advocacy function could be applied in a more intense and structured way in the Caribbean region).

In terms of concrete action lines under RQI-4, particularly the *CALIDENA* action line accounts for confirmed high effectiveness. The action plans for most of the 8 exercises are under implementation or in preparation and key-stakeholders confirm the quality of facilitation services and the adjacent support provided. The same accounts for the *Capacity Building* action line, where all direct recipients unanimously stated to have received needs based and quality consulting services and proved to have used and multiplied these in favour of their institutions – often addressing issues that allowed to maintain high level QI services provision (e.g. Training of Heads of CaRLs Laboratories (Jamaica) and overcoming technical challenges, e.g. ambient conditions problem at BSJ Jamaica and BBS Belize). The regional dialogue work likewise paved the ground for the development of regional QI service provision in the areas of the Caribbean Reference Laboratories (CaRLs) and the Caribbean Cooperation for Accreditation (CCA)³.

The overall high flexibility of the support service allocation and the close project management allowed essential ad-hoc support, necessary to address occasional setbacks rapidly (e.g. consultancies to maintain the capacities of the CaRL for mass in Jamaica). In this respect also the “on-line consultancy” option helped much to provide ad-hoc support where needed and helped to create confidence of workshop participants in applying and multiplying the knowhow transferred (this is true and relates to all three action lines).

³ Regional cooperation scheme for international recognised accreditations composed of National Accreditation Bodies (NABs) and National Accreditation Focal Points (NAFPs).

Impact –Although not solely attributable to RQI-4, the impact of the project (seen in conjunction with its predecessor project and partly with the EU-TBT 10th EDF project⁴) is significant:

The regional organisation CROSQ is today a well-established and operational regional QI institution which hosts the regional networks (CARIMET, CCA, CANCAB, MIKE)⁵ and the Technical Management Committee for standards (TMC), and has a clear mandate and is recognised by its members (as reported by all NSBs interviewed during the evaluation). It has established a regional QI policy (in draft for Council approval in early 2016) and provides an operational strategy for the regional collaboration (developed with assistance of RQI-4). Altogether this is the necessary enabling environment to unfold the potential of regional QI harmonisation. This major and tangible impact is clearly attributable to the row of Regional Quality Infrastructure (RQI) projects implemented by PTB. CROSQ management and NSBs unanimously stated that this stage could have hardly been reached without the continuous assistance from PTB. The RQI-4 assistance directed to the regional network establishment, maintenance and further development (CCA, CARIMET and support to CROSQ TOs) have clearly led to increased availability and accessibility of internationally recognised QI services to private and public clients in the Caribbean region (measurement and calibration services in specific areas and internationally recognised accreditation of conformity assessment bodies). The action line *CALIDENA*, as first value chain exercises of this kind in the CARIFORUM states, led to confirmed higher recognition of the NSBs and improved awareness of the importance of QI services at public and private sector level. The *CALIDENA* exercises intensified the cooperation of national actors (in the value chain) and at support organisations level (e.g. in several cases action plans involve many support organisations interacting and supplementing each other). The approach was found to add value by all interviewed stakeholders, although in all cases stakeholders reported that there was more engagement and investment in resources than they initially expected. Furthermore, all interviewed NSBs confirmed interest and also indicated concrete value chains for which the *CALIDENA* instrument is planned to be applied (by own means of the institutions or alternative funding). In addition, the regional support organisation Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) considers to include a QI focused component in their value chain work in the region (tested with good success already with the Black Belly Sheep value chain in Barbados).

The action line *Capacity Building* provided essential support to individual NSBs or groups of NSBs (staff training, workshops and technical consultancies at NSB level)

⁴ European Union Technical Barriers to Trade project (“Technical Barriers to Trade” is one component of the 10th EDF Programme “Support of the Forum of Caribbean States in the implementation of the commitments undertaken under the Economic Partnership Agreement”), 2012 - 2017

⁵ Caribbean Cooperation on Accreditation (CCA), Caribbean Metrology System (CARIMET), Caribbean Network of Conformity Assessment Bodies (CANAB) and the Marketing, Information, Knowledge and Education Committee (MIKE)

at the request of these institutions. The overall impact of these measures is clearly visible and confirmed by the recipients and comprises the ability to maintain essential services and intensifying regional cooperation and knowledge exchange based on the organisation of group training sessions (metrology) incorporating several regional NSBs. All measures were ex-post covered by the option of continuous on-line support by qualified PTB consultants which had a strong impact on the confidence of trainees and institutions in using and multiplying the knowledge transferred.

Efficiency - The efficiency analysis is challenged by the non-availability of reliable baseline data on clients demand at national and regional level. However, as observed by the evaluation, the project management acted cost-conscious and decisions were always taken in agreement with the CROSQ management (confirmed by the CEO of CROSQ). Specifically the CALIDENA exercises demonstrated a good cost-benefit ratio which was a result of their multi-level impact. NSBs unanimously confirmed highest quality consulting services (action line *Capacity Building*) based on their needs. These services were reportedly provided in a timely manner and the anticipated outputs and results were mostly achieved. Based on these findings, the efficiency of the project can be judged as good.

Sustainability - In terms of sustainability it has to be stated that CROSQ, in its mandated position as regional driver for QI integration, harmonization and development, is heavily dependent on donor funding at the current level of functioning and service provision. However, there is good evidence that the particular areas addressed by RQI-4 will turn out to be sustainable. This is true for the CCA scheme, as the core actor JANAAC shows a strong business development orientation and benefits from a solid institutional funding structure at present⁶. The same is potentially true for the CaRLs scheme, however some external factors (high staff fluctuation / getting qualified replacements / high cost of maintaining traceability) challenge the stability of the metrology services in Jamaica and many other countries (which is clearly beyond the control of the project). In addition, several stakeholders at national level (NSBs and other actors) and at regional level confirmed the intent to replicate CALIDENA exercises in other sectors or institutionalise QI relevant components in their value chain work (e.g. IICA).

Project performance (ranking by criterion ⁷)	Relevance	2
	Effectiveness	3
	Impact	2
	Efficiency	2
	Sustainability	3
	Overall assessment	2,4

⁶ Bureau of Standards Jamaica (BSJ) and Jamaican National Agency for Accreditation (JANAAC) both are funded by law through the Standard Compliance Fee (SCF) which is sourced from a percentage of the taxable value of imports to the country (3%)

⁷ In line with the ranking system suggested by the GIZ Evaluation Criteria and Performance Guidelines for Technical Cooperation Projects

3. Causes and success factors for the observed results and change processes

Reviewing the Capacity Works (CW) success factors in line with the key-questions established in the inception report, the evaluation comes to the conclusion that the RQI-4 project adhered quite closely with the set requirements for a successful project implementation.

Strategy - The project shows a clear and plausible strategic orientation, aligning its activities and action lines to the regional QI policies and supporting CROSQ in its mandated role.

Cooperation - The cooperation structure is defined in an implementation agreement with CROSQ and due to the fact that the final beneficiaries of the RQI-4 measures are with exception of the Dominican Republic⁸ all members represented in the CROSQ Council, adequate information and coordination is inbuilt. Furthermore, PTB manages and coordinates the major donor support at regional level (RQI-4 and EU-TBT 10th EDF project) and CROSQ sought pro-actively to coordinate with other relevant actors / development projects (e.g. GIZ EPA regional project⁹ / IICA / Caribbean Export / Compete Caribbean).

Steering Structure – With regards to the steering structure most aspects are well implemented and managed and essential aspects are covered by the implementation agreement between CROSQ and PTB. A regular and continuous exchange between CROSQ and PTB takes place (at strategic and operational level) and all key-stakeholders (including the NSBs / NABs) confirm that the level of information is sufficient and the decision making is transparent to them. In case of the cooperation with the Dominican Republic (DR), the evaluation discovered slightly intransparent decision making processes (at least for third parties) as decision making on support is not formally documented. Despite the fact that key-stakeholders in DR judged the processes as “informal but very efficient”, the evaluation calls for better documentation in this context. The monitoring of the project did fall short as even the monitoring designates at CROSQ expressed difficulties to attribute output and outcome indicators to project activities. Here the evaluation calls for better reflected and more rationale establishment of indicators in the future.

Processes - RQI-4 addressed directly the processes at the level of the implementing partner in providing consultancy services related to the development and management of the regional networks. Furthermore, the project supported the development of a consistent organisational strategy for CROSQ (2014 – 2019) analysing relevant core processes and providing pathways for improvement.

⁸ The Dominican Republic is invited to Council meetings and regularly participates at Council meetings as observer

⁹ Support of Regional and National Institutions in the Implementation of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) in the Caribbean – Project of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

Learning and innovation - The learning and innovation aspect could have been planned better from project start. As the project activities did not include a dedicated sensitisation, information and communication component, the project performance falls short in this aspect. Particularly the good practice examples of CALIDENA could have been used more intensively throughout the project duration. Only recently, the project catches up with this aspect by intensifying structured and more comprehensive media work in the context of CALIDENA exercises (Belize and Suriname) and is planning for intensified dissemination of good practice and sensitisation campaigns highlighting the importance of QI at regional level.

4. Learning processes and lessons learnt

Pre-contacting turned out to be of essential value to the field phase preparation and results - Pre-contacting of key-stakeholders during the inception phase of the evaluation mission (via Skype) helped the solid preparation of the field phase in providing direct and in-depth information from those people managing and implementing the project (in this case the Chief Executive Officer of CROSQ, the CROSQ Project Manager for RQI-4, the key-consultant for CALIDENA, and the key-consultant for metrology).

Action lines of a project have to be clearly shaped and structured, even if the project, for good reasons, needs high flexibility in the process of implementation – The *CALIDENA* action line represented the identity of the project (RQI-4) and distinguished it from other donor activities addressing regional QI system improvement (e.g. EU-TBT project). The other action lines fell short in visibility (*Capacity Building* line and *Regional Dialogue* line). As the visibility and distinguishability fell short in these two areas, some irritations were caused at partner level (NSBs) and even at the level of the CROSQ Secretariat (calling for more in-depth upfront planning, clearer structuring of action lines, information on eligible activities and budget available). Overall, better structuring, clearer identification of the action lines and more transparency on available budget by action line is called for by the evaluation.

Regional projects need to consider information and communication as important aspect to leverage impact – The *CALIDENA* exercises (8) carried out under RQI-4 have raised high attention at different levels (e.g. involvement of the private and public sector, line Ministries of the NSBs, etc.). Structured information and communication work adjacent to this action line has just recently started in two cases (Belize and Suriname). The preparation of best practice examples is still work in progress (together with the CIAT Network – International Centre for Tropical Agriculture in Colombia) – which is too late in the process to gain optimal use and impact for the project. **Basically all regional projects with strong sensitisation demand should by default include a dedicated information and communication component and a respective budget.**

5. Recommendations

Based on the findings and observed shortcomings, the evaluation provides the following recommendations.

Recommendations focussing on overarching issues related to Q.5 Technical Cooperation activities:

- **Improvement of the project documentation for complex, multi action projects** - The evaluation identified that the project documentation needs to be improved. Due to the fact that RQI-4 consisted of many (> 60) individual actions, the access to project information by third persons (evaluators / auditors) can only be assured if the project information is captured in a timely and structured way (e.g. time/period, title, activity, action line, country, consultant(s), resources, and records on decision making).
- **Always consider the importance of sensitisation, information and communication as self-standing structured action adjacent to regional project implementation** – Overall, the impact of CALIDENA application was evaluated as quite strong under RQI-4, however its value for regional sensitisation about the importance of QI was not fully unfold due to the absence of a dedicated activity and related resources allocation for information and communication exercises.
- **Advocacy support at policy decision maker level should be used in a planned, structured and pro-active way in complex regional projects** (in situations where the policy decision makers put strains on QI development) – The evaluation has observed that in several cases the direct advocacy work of PTB (e.g. PTB officials visiting line Ministries together with NSB representatives) had substantial impact on the decision making in favour of national support to QI development. This kind of advocacy work is recommended to be added to any such projects in the future for stronger leverage (obviously in close coordination with the supported organisations / NSBs).

Recommendations focussing more on specific RQI-4 project related issues:

- **Collection of comprehensive baseline data on QI capacities, shortcomings at technical and organisational level and current and prospective client demand for QI services** – The evaluation recognises the challenges and complexity of collecting data from regional QI actors in order to obtain data in a comprehensive and continuous way (limited capacities / low priority activity / no immediate benefit for the individual NSB / NAB, etc.).

- Despite this fact the evaluation advocates for enforced efforts of PTB and the implementing partner (CROSQ) in this field to the benefit of rational, informed and efficient decision making on future regional QI development exercises (and also improved accountability).

- **Establishment of adequate indicators which are clearly related to the project activities, enabling proper monitoring and corrective measures during project implementation** - The RQI-4 outcome and output indicators did not always fully match the activities / activity lines of the project. It is recommended that clear indicators by action line are formulated (which was not the case) and to use indicators which are clearly linked to the activities / are influenced by the activities (only partly the case under RQI-4).