

EXTERNAL EVALUATION – SHORT REPORT

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Technical evaluator: n/a

Project title: Strengthening Quality Infrastructure for Trade Enhancement and Consumer Protection in the SADC Region

Country | Region: SADC
Project No.: 2012.2297.5
Period: September 2013 – August 2016
Executing Agency:
Implementing Partner: PTB
SADC Secretariat
PTB | Working Group: Q.55
PTB | Project Coordinator: Kathrin Wunderlich
Date: 02. June 2016

This is an independent evaluation. The contents represent the view of the evaluator and cannot be taken to reflect the views of PTB.

List of abbreviations

SADC	Southern African Development Community
ILAC	International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation
NMI	National Metrological Institute
PTB	Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt
QI	Quality Infrastructure
SADCA	SADC Cooperation on Accreditation
SADCAS	SADC Standardisation Service
SADMEL	SADC Cooperation in Legal Metrology
SADCMET	SADC Cooperation in Measurement Traceability
SADCSTAN	SADC Cooperation in Standardisation
SQAM	Standards, Quality Assurance, Accreditation and Metrology
TBT	Technical barriers to trade
TBTSC	TBT Stakeholder Committee
TRLC	SADC Technical Regulations Liaison Committee

1. Project Description

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) in its effort of developing a customs union and a common market has agreed on the SADC Trade Protocol which is supplemented by an Annex on Technical Barriers to Trade. Implementing the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Annex is a challenge to the member states. SADC's development of Quality Infrastructure (QI), which SADC calls SQAM (Standards, Quality Assurance, Accreditation and Metrology) is placed in this context. Linked to SADC's Secretariat are six regional structures that consist of delegates from the responsible institutions in member states: On accreditation (SADCA), measurement traceability (SADCMET), legal metrology (SADCMEL), standardisation (SADCSTAN), technical regulations (TRLIC), and a stakeholder committee (TBTSC). PTB has been cooperating with the SADC in the field of QI since about 1998.

The PTB project's objective is "Quality Infrastructure for trade enhancement and consumer protection in SADC in accordance with the SADC Trade Protocol TBT Annex is strengthened". To achieve this, the project supported activities of the SQAM structures as they define their priorities in a wide range, as long as they fall within the project's objective and the associated indicators, and as long as they promise genuine progress. Support was given for activities like training, concept development, regional and international exchange and awareness raising. Through the SADC Secretariat, PTB cooperates with all SADC member states. PTB is commissioned by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

PTB works in several other projects with regional and continental structures in Africa, in which institutions of SADC members states and SADC structures are also involved to some or a larger extent.

The current project with SADC (2013-2016) has been evaluated. Data was gathered mainly through documents and during a week of meetings of the SADC QI structures in March 2016 in Gaborone (Annual General Meeting of the SADC QI structures, TBTEG).

2. Assessment of the project

The project is assessed overall as very successful in what it achieved and in how it worked. The findings and conclusions are summarised below.

2.1 Status of the change process

The evaluation assesses the achievements of the project as a process of change. The assessment is based on the following five standard criteria.

Relevance

The project is considered very relevant because it matches priorities in line with major SADC strategies and needs of partners and fully addresses the current situation in areas where support is needed. It might become even more relevant if it focused a bit more on tangible economic effects although it is acknowledged that this will not be feasible for all elements of quality infrastructure.

Effectiveness

The project's objective to strengthen quality Infrastructure for trade enhancement and consumer protection in SADC was achieved and the project is therefore considered effective. Most of the indicators were achieved, at least partly. Even if not all indicators could be measured as stipulated, other data received by the evaluator shows clear progress. The expertise of the SADC QI unit is asked for by SADC sector approaches, regional initiatives and international organizations. The regional QI structures are increasingly active, and so are the structures in member countries. Not all countries engage, but engagement has increased. Steps have been made to achieve an ILAC recognised Mutual Recognition Arrangement for SADCA.

Impact

The project and the efforts of the SADC QI structures together had quite some impact. The move of the SADCSTAN secretariat from South Africa to Zambia in 2014 signifies regional progress in the long-term development of QI. The move to Zambia was only possible because Zambian staff had been part of the regional standardisation structure and thus learned how such a role could be applied meaningfully. In a long-term perspective, the SADC directorate has been strengthened in terms of personnel (from 1 staff position initially funded partly by PTB, to full funding by SADC around 2005, to 2 positions in 2010 and a third position in 2014), now all fully funded by SADC. In terms of perspectives, SADC SQAM structures can now move more intensively for international recognition.

At Annual Meetings participants get exposed to QI and regional themes beyond their immediate concerns. They can discuss such issues, implement them in their work and plan with such background information in mind. They can also use this information in order to advise their institutions and refer persons they work with to relevant persons or institutions in the region. The structure of the SADC QI is not only taken as an example for the development of QI in other regions of Africa, but is also active at continental and international level of QI. There is therefore impact far beyond the planned results of the project. PTB's contribution in this is significant.

Efficiency

Efficiency of the project is considered very good because many aspects of high efficiency and no points of low efficiency could be identified.

Sustainability

The project is considered as contributing to a high level of sustainability because the supported structures seem stable and are likely to progress even without external support. Continued PTB support seems justified for SADC QI structures to achieve more progress than they would achieve without such support. But support is not needed to sustain the status quo attained.

2.2 Success factors for the observed results and change processes

The evaluation analyses the reasons for results achieved and why some results were not achieved. Its sub-chapters are based on the Capacity WORKS success factors.

Strategy

A crucial element of PTB's strategy in this project is that it works through the regional QI structures. All activities are approved through the QI institutions and carried out in or with at least 3 member states, with a few exceptions. There are no quota for member states or structures. There is also no sectoral focus which the evaluator considers justified. As part of the strategy, the PTB project works with the whole spectrum of QI components. PTB invests where the QI structures set their priorities as long as it is within its own objectives which allow for a lot of flexibility. This strategy strengthens the SADC QI structures. The evaluation sees no reason to increase bilateral cooperation. But a stronger focus on implementation in the field by end users might have made the strategy even more relevant and effective.

Cooperation

The whole SADC QI structure is one of cooperation. One national institution provides the regional coordinator with the secretariat and a secretary, both from the same organisation. Other institutions from other member states take the role of chair and other office bearers in the respective executive committees. Because of this structure, regional SQAM structures are lean. Officers do the work aside from their normal jobs. Cooperation with other donor organisations runs smoothly. Cooperation with GIZ has always been sought, but there is not yet potential to cooperate on value chains because the SADC process on joint development of value chains is not yet at a stage where the QI could support.

Steering structure

The PTB project's steering structure is integrated in the SADC QI steering structure. All activities funded by the PTB project are brought up through some QI structure, discussed and approved there, then scrutinised by the SADC SQAM unit. These processes are genuine reflective processes that have contributed to significant improvements of proposals. Only activities approved will be supported by PTB. The process led to a high level of ownership of such activities and to learning within the SQAM structures.

Processes

It was a consistent feedback in interviews that PTB responds to SADC QI structure strategies in line with their needs. PTB was praised for aligning better to the SADC processes than other donors in some ways. A number of PTB's ways of working were named, like its flexibility, thematic engagement, reliability, its clear formal requirements and the frequent and systematic interaction of PTB staff with actors in the region. It was also praised that short-term consultants come mostly from the region.

Learning and innovation

On individual level many persons have learned from their participation in meetings of the QI structures, from attending training and from engaging with the process. On organisational level, national organisations have learned through their members, have changed routines and acquired new competencies. On network level, the regional QI structures have increased their

capacity and have changed some ways of working. They cover more ground now than years before, and PTB support played a role in that. In terms of learning on society level, information is inconclusive. It cannot be determined to what extent end users (industry, civil society, laboratories, government enforcement agencies etc.) have learned in the process. It can also not be determined to what extent the QI structures actually learned from the needs and priorities of end users. The evaluator sees the need for the SQAM structures to learn how they can get access to end user needs and perspectives, and how they can get their feedback. The evaluation explores some options.

3. Learning processes and learning experience

The PTB project works without a permanent coordinator in the SADC region. This worked well because the SADC secretariat and South Africa's NMI took over regional roles that would typically be conducted by a permanent coordinator, and because the SQAM structures are sufficiently equipped to conduct this kind of coordinating role.

This project's way of working seems particularly suited to generate sustainable structures and to enhance ownership. It genuinely works on a regional level.

4. Recommendations

The evaluator recommends that PTB support should be continued in a follow-up project in a similar way as in the current project. Some emphasis should be put on the utilisation of QI efforts by end users in the member states, and such experiences should be discussed in the regional QI structures. SADC QI institutions should pursue international recognition. PTB should review the strong points of the way PTB works in this project and consider sharing these within PTB for discussion if PTB should and can enhance this way of working more in other projects.



Imprint

Published by

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