

Issues for discussion: Designing the 2008 Partner Questionnaire

The 2007 questionnaires (see attachment) were sent during the summer 2007 to WTO ambassadors or permanent representatives with a two month deadline.

The questionnaire for partner countries and donors followed the same structure and required similar procedures. Both questionnaires were structured around four main heading (e.g. (i) what is your aid for trade strategy, (ii) how much aid-for-trade do you provide/receive, (iii) are programmes implemented effectively and (iv) do you participate in mutual accountability mechanisms?). The questionnaires had two key objectives:

- Elicit information on the implementation of aid for trade strategies at country level, and key areas highlighted by the WTO Taskforce such as aid predictability and regional initiatives, and;
- Facilitate a wide-governmental discussion about trade development strategies and the implementation of aid effectiveness principles of the Paris Declaration to aid for trade.

It was also felt that it was important to keep certain symmetry between donors and partners, so that the monitoring remained balanced. However, that meant that the costs of filling the questionnaire were very high, particularly because of the need for inter-ministerial cooperation, and partially explains the low rate of response.

To maintain the credibility of the Aid for Trade Initiative requires a significant increase in partner countries response rate to the 2008 questionnaire. This can be achieved by increasing (i) raising awareness, (ii) increasing the relevance of the questionnaire and (iii) reducing the administrative burden of responding to it.

i. Raising awareness

The WTO in close cooperation with the multilateral and regional developing banks is planning to hold a number of national and sub regional aid for trade events. The OECD will use these events to raise awareness about the Aid for Trade monitoring framework and the benefits of actively participating in the 2nd Global Aid for Trade Review through using the questionnaire to provide transparency about what is happening, what is not and where further improvements are required.

⇒ *What other avenues do partners consider effective for raising awareness about the benefits of presenting their aid for trade story at the 2nd Global Aid for Trade review?*

ii. *Increasing relevance*

The partner country questionnaire should ideally fulfil four functions:

- 1) Strengthen partner countries' voice: Providing partners the opportunity to communicate to the international community (incl. donors) what's working and what's not in their aid-for-trade programmes and their relationship with donors;
- 2) Facilitate national planning of trade development programmes. The process of answering the questionnaire should become an opportunity to take stock of past and existing trade development initiatives and to re-assess priorities, external financing requirements and implementation plans. It could also be used as a focal point for the necessary inter-ministerial dialogue on trade development.
- 3) Increase Global Accountability: Tracking and facilitating progress on the effectiveness of aid for trade in helping developing countries to build their trade capacity;
- 4) Enable dissemination of best practice by sharing with all other developing countries, examples of successful strategies and projects.

⇒ *What structure of the questionnaire would increase the relevance for partner countries? Are the four main headings of the 2007 questionnaire comprehensive enough to tell the story of what is happening, what is not and where improvements are needed? Are there key areas missing?*

iii. *Reducing the administrative burden*

- ⇒ To whom should such a questionnaire be sent? Which ministry is best placed to coordinate the process? Trade, Finance or Foreign Affairs/Development Coordination? Or is the requirement for inter-ministerial coordination unrealistic?
- ⇒ Are language and timing real issues? We sent the 2007 version in the three WTO official languages (English, French and Spanish) and gave two months for filling it.
- ⇒ Which type of format would be most convenient? Are on-line questionnaires easier to manage? Multiple-choices would increase comparability and lower the burden but would it also reduce the comprehensiveness and, thus, relevance of the answers?