

Trade Competitiveness Section (TCS)

The Commonwealth Secretariat's Trade Competitiveness Section (TCS) of the Trade, Oceans and Natural Resources Directorate provides technical assistance (TA) to member countries to improve their trade competitiveness in global markets. Recognising the limited size of the domestic market in many member countries, TCS has a strong focus on export development, with interventions targeted at the national level, and where requested escalated to the regional and international levels. The section has recently been given added responsibility for implementing the Commonwealth Secretariat's Trade Finance Facility and the Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda.

Specific areas of expertise:

1. **National Trade Policy** – Support member countries to design and implement national trade policies and national export strategic action plans to build trade competitiveness by addressing domestic supply constraints. National trade policies and national export strategies have been designed for many member countries. Interventions in this area aim to secure sustainable market access for priority exports.
2. **Export Diversification** – The section helps member countries to identify 'New Products and New Markets' and develop schemes around them to diversify their exports. Our technical assistance helps member countries to develop targeted action plans for linking into regional and global value chains. TCS also helps member countries in their multilateral, regional and bilateral trade negotiations.
3. **Trade in Services** – Support member countries to develop regulatory frameworks to provide stability and predictability in trade in services.
4. **Trade Facilitation** – Support member countries and/or regions with niche, highly targeted interventions that support members' institutional capacity to engage and implement trade facilitation initiatives.
5. **Investment Facilitation** – Support member countries' investment facilitation and promotion programs and capacity-building on treaty negotiations, project proposal development, project appraisal and investment portfolio for targeted investors. Also provides technical assistance on regulatory and policy reforms for improving the business climate to attract qualitative investment in critical sectors of the economy.
6. **Cross-cutting Trade and Development Issues** – TCS also has Trade and Gender and Trade and Youth programmes that aim to increase the participation of women and young people in global trade and promote inclusivity in the design of trade policies that reflect the ambitions of member countries to achieve the SDGs for women and youth. This work also enhances MSME contributions to trade and development through interventions such as the Intra Commonwealth SME Association.

TCS works in response to requests from Commonwealth governments or apex institutions and provides technical assistance to address the above competitiveness issues. Areas of expertise also include export diversification strategies; gender sensitisation of trade policies; implications of trade agreements and related policy advocacy; implications and compliance to WTO agreements; GATS and Trade in Services Agreements; Mega FTAs such as Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA) and Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs); Trade Facilitation measures and Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) along with cost of compliance to the TFA. In 2018/19, the section will deliver 18 technical assistance projects in 13 member countries.

Technical assistance programmes (2018/19)

Country	Project
1. Botswana	Review and design the National Export Development Strategy 2018-2023
2. Brunei Darussalam	Address barriers to the integration of Brunei Darussalam into services value chains
3. CAIPA/Caribbean Export	Improve the business climate – strengthening procedures to start a business in the Caribbean
4. Cameroon	Design a national e-commerce strategy
5. Cameroon	Review of regulatory policies and legal reform of e-commerce sector
6. Grenada	New Product, New Market analysis
7. East African Community	Develop International Cargo Transit System and implement Authorise Economic Operator (AEO) schemes
8. Malawi	Review of National Export Strategy 2012-2018 and design Successor NES to improve export competitiveness
9. Mauritius	Technical assistance for negotiations in TiSA
10. Pan Commonwealth	Facilitate trade and business development through the Intra Commonwealth SME Association (ICSA)
11. Lesotho	Technical assistance for investment facilitation and export development capacity-building
12. Lesotho	Develop National Brand Management Framework
13. Seychelles	Development study to assist the development of Port Victoria
14. Sri Lanka	Develop Export Development Financing Framework

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