

Key Results of the 7UP4 Project

Background of the project: CUTS Centre for Competition Investment & Economic Regulation (CUTS CCIER) with the support of Department for International Development (DFID), UK; International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA), Sweden implemented a project titled, 'Strengthening Constituencies for Effective Competition Regimes in Select West African Countries' referred to as the '7Up4' project. The project spanning for over two years (Jun 2008 – July 2010) was implemented in three Anglophone countries i.e. The Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria and four Francophone countries i.e. Senegal, Burkina Faso, Mali and Togo in coordination with selected project partners, with CUTS-CCIER acting as the project team.

Objective of the project: The major objective of the project was to develop an appreciation of the need for an effective competition regime among national stakeholders such as policy makers, regulators, civil society organizations, consumer groups, academics and media persons and build their capacity as effective facilitators of such a regime

Effectiveness – Results from the project

1. **Output 1: Enhanced knowledge on competition policy and consumer welfare issues across various stakeholders- (partner organizations, individual consultants, sector regulators, media officials, Academicians, NRG members):**
The evaluators submit that this objective has been adequately addressed through project activities, particularly the NRG meetings, national and regional training workshops. The training workshops were cited by the stakeholders as rather useful, as these broadened the participants' understanding

on basic concepts of competition and concomitant issues. The stakeholders who have benefited the most in terms of enhancement of knowledge are the project partners, most of who had experience in other domains such as gender and education, and have now got exposed to competition issues through this project. Stakeholders met by the evaluators claimed to have developed a broad understanding on the felt need of competition legislation, which can only intensify along with greater penetration of local acceptability of the subject.

2. **Output2: Countries helped to fast track process of evolution and implementation of national competition regimes with**

substantial inputs from civil society (establishing a process of partnership):

The Country Research Reports (CRRs) and Preliminary Country Papers (PCPs) stand out to be the most important input from the civil society organizations towards evolution and implementation of national competition regime. However, it cannot be demonstrated that this content has been imbibed by in-country actors and applied in policy actions or pro-competition negotiations, sufficiently at the country level. Establishment of formal process of engagement with civil society deemed to be vital for enabling the CSOs to provide their inputs regularly, has only been seen in The Gambia. The intention to build the agenda forward after a consultation process to resolve the issues identified under the project (through CRRs and PCPs) was reflected in the preparation of the advocacy road map which has not received due attention from the necessary stakeholders after the project.

3. **Output3: Process of dialogue initiated between government, civil society, business community on economic and regulatory policy issues that will make it possible for stakeholders to work together and shape economic reforms agenda:** One of the positive features of the 7Up4 project has been the establishment of the NRG group in each country, which has garnered wide appreciation from stakeholders for its ability to foster

interactions between different competencies on competition issues; however the evaluation has not encountered any evidence that would suggest sustenance of the dialogue beyond the project realms. On another front, the level of political buy in, ascribed to be the major constraint to enforcement of competition, has remained moderate at the overall project level. The project has not been able to create any formalized process of dialogue with the competition authorities though there have been sporadic efforts by the competition authorities in Burkina Faso and Togo to engage with the partners.

4. **Output4: Credibility of civil society organizations asserted as ‘actors’ in national competition reforms, thus motivating them to pursue the reforms agenda further:** With the knowledge gained during the 7UP4, these CSOs¹ felt greatly empowered to participate in discussions on competition issues and consumer protection. Even though the project has accorded visibility, there is a caveat, as the subject is still very nascent for most of them. Also it is important to establish that pursuit of the reforms agenda further would be highly conditional upon the project’s partners’ willingness and ability to dialogue further, which remains a challenge given their limited financial and human

¹ CSOs under output 4 refer only to the project partner unless stated otherwise.

capabilities. At a minimum, the project has provided these CSOs enough visibility and credibility to be known as 'lead CSO' dealing on competition front which could possibly result in greater inflow of donor assisted projects on related themes.

5. **Output5: International community made aware of the need to promote a healthy competition culture in the region, and to contribute meaningfully to strengthening competition regimes therein:** The project has provided sufficient opportunities for engagement with the international community, which is one of the highlights of this project. The presence of representatives from donor and other development agencies in country specific NRG groups (for e.g. presence of DFID Ghana representative in Ghana NRG) created a qualitative platform for discussion on country specific competition issues. The project has given international exposure to all the project partners whose representatives participated at the ECOWAS regional authority, held at Ghana in November 2010. The evaluation considers CUTS project team's efforts of disseminating about hundred copies of the synthesis reports at the 6th UN Review Conference on Competition Policy, organized by UNCTAD to be highly praiseworthy as this has not only given the 7UP4 project enormous visibility at the highest possible international platform but could also generate interest in the

international community to assist efforts towards improving the state of competition in West Africa countries.

Impact

6. The broad impact of such an intervention can be identified by analyzing the extent to which the project has contributed towards the implementation of a healthy competition regime in each of the seven countries in the form of strengthening the capacity and visibility of institutions, in pursuing the agenda on competition further– (competition authorities, civil societies, media houses and universities) and enforcement or amendment to competition legislations.
7. **For partner organizations and representatives:** A wider network of partners, enhanced credibility when sourcing for funds, better visibility among national and international community members who now consider them as one of the lead organizations on competition issues emerges as a major impact of this project.
8. **For Media:** On the basis of scant interviews with the media officials during the evaluation, the evaluators contend that there has not been any significant increase in reportage on competition issues and resultant increase in public awareness of the same.

9. **For Competition Authorities:** For resource starved competition authorities there have been no evidences of government buy-in towards budgetary support enhancements for competition regulatory and support institutions. In countries, where there was no competition law, situation remains unchanged.
10. Enforcement of current legislations or their amendment is dependent on political bodies' buy-in, which has been mixed across project countries. In essence, the advocacy was relatively weak overall, with most of it being limited to the NRG meetings. A sound advocacy plan and wide dissemination of the project materials beyond the confined boundaries of the project could have reaped more fruitful results.

Sustainability

11. From evaluation's perspective, the sustainability of the project intervention at the country level can be assessed from two angles – (i) Institutionalization of competition related knowledge and advocacy methodologies developed in the project; (iii) Strengthening of networks to carry on the advocacy messages further, with appropriate local customization
12. The evaluation considers that the project beneficiaries now have the necessary knowledge and awareness of competition facing aspects and can be seen as having a

positive role in the pursuit of *competition* reforms agenda. However, absence of interactions among the NRG members and project partners beyond the project span in all project locations is seen as a failing of the advocacy and sustainability aspects. No follow-up on the actions undertaken as per the country advocacy roadmaps hints to a major shortcoming in the project.

13. A catalyst to sustaining the results of this project can be the integration of the project's research findings and advocacy network into the International Network of Civil Society Organizations on Competition (INSOC).
14. The 7Up4 project is seen as a first phase of a long term process and its sustainability is not only dependent upon project beneficiaries' commitment and initiative but also on external factors viz., financial support for the project partners to pursue it further and the intent of the political realities to support the process of implementation and evolution of a healthy competition regime.