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Mainstreaming trade in development strategies – Synthesis of the country case studies

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1. Introduction

This chapter presents a synthesis of the five chapters in this volume on the topic of mainstreaming trade policy in development policy frameworks, notably the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). There is a considerable amount of confusion in the literature over the concept and meaning of the term trade mainstreaming in the context of the PRSP. This was noted as an issue to be clarified in the course of the background works in the five countries. Indeed, this lack of clarity was considered to be one reason why PRSP evaluation studies have found that trade mainstreaming in the PRSPs has been fairly weak so far. Section 2.1 addresses the definition of this concept.

Section 2.2 then summarizes some observations made on trade mainstreaming in the PRSPs based on evaluation studies. These studies have pointed to a number of weaknesses, although the situation is improving in the more recent PRSPs. In undertaking the background works in the five countries, these observations on the definition and the identified weaknesses were reviewed and discussed. Section 3 introduces the five case studies, covering the analytical approach taken, information used and issues raised. Section 4 then picks up several issues with a view to contributing to improving the process of mainstreaming in the new PRSPs and related policy documents.

2. Trade mainstreaming – concept and issues

2.1 What is trade mainstreaming?

In the literature, there are not many papers that have clearly defined this concept in a way that is operationally useful. One important contribution is from UNECA that has published an issues paper and country studies. In the issues paper (UNECA 2004), mainstreaming is defined as follows, "A working definition of the term mainstreaming trade policies in national development strategies involves the systematic promotion of mutually reinforcing policy actions across government departments and agencies, creating synergies in support of agreed development goals .... therefore, a deeper understanding of how trade policies can complement and reinforce policy actions across the board is an important step in achieving enhanced development results." The paper however does not elaborate further on the operational aspects. The Tanzania case study in that series (Wangwe *et al.* 2007) also makes an interesting statement, "Mainstreaming trade in development strategies presupposes that the era of trade liberalization is being replaced by the era of trade policy and managing trade for development." In this view, trade mainstreaming is seen as a process of actively using trade policy to promote development, rather than limited to trade liberalization alone.

Rahman (2004) also offers a number of interesting views on the concept in a presentation made at an expert meeting on trade mainstreaming: i) a process of reflecting on trade policies and priority areas of action within the overall national development plan or strategy; ii) a process of bargaining among key stakeholders; iii) establishing a correct balance between trade liberalization and companion policies; iv) bringing trade matters into the dialogue on the poverty reduction; and v) raising the profile of trade in the development debate.

The World Bank's PRSP Sourcebook (World Bank 2002) is meant to help countries prepare PRSPs. Its chapter on trade policy (Chapter 13) provides briefs on many trade topics including trade policy instruments and institutions, tariff regimes, NTBs, export subsidies and taxes, export processing zone, regional trade agreement (RTA), complementary policies and so on. While being useful for these briefs, the chapter does not address how these policies are to be integrated or mainstreamed in sectoral policies. One reason why this might have happened was that the Sourcebook did not have chapters on productive sectors like agriculture and industry, where mainstreaming issues are most relevant.

Based on these limited sources, a common view seems to be that - as in the UNECA definition – mainstreaming is a process of formulating the PRSP and related national policy documents in such a way that contradictions are avoided and strategies and policy statements are made mutually consistent. Also notable is Rahman's view that mainstreaming is also about establishing a correct balance

between trade liberalization and companion policies. Implicit in this view is that the depth of liberalization is a function of the ability to put in place companion policies. This message is also important for *et al.* articulating trade-support measures. The Wangwe *et al.* view is also interesting in that it sees the process as actively managing trade policy for promoting development.

In the country case studies in this volume, the authors took note of the above definitions and discussed them with a view to articulating a practical approach for trade mainstreaming. That was not easy. In the end, a two-step approach was followed: i) first, a careful reading was done of the relevant national policy frameworks, starting with the PRSP, with a view to examine where and how trade and related policy issues are mentioned and articulated; and ii) second, for selected policy issues of a more divisive nature, the positions taken, or not taken, on these issues in various policy frameworks were examined with a view to identifying consistency/synergy, on the one hand, and the gaps and contradictions, on the other. This approach is similar to that articulated in the above UNECA paper.

2.2   Issues on trade mainstreaming

PRSPs have been subject to evaluations by agencies like the World Bank and IMF as well as bilateral donors, NGOs and analysts. There is a fairly high level of consensus in these reviews on the weaknesses, e.g. sectoral policies are not well mainstreamed, PRSP preparation process was not inclusive and participatory enough, trade-poverty linkages were not considered enough, and so on.

As regards trade mainstreaming, there are some important contributions to note. One fairly comprehensive review of the trade content in PRSPs was the study undertaken by ODI (Hewitt and Gillson 2003) covering 17 countries. It analysed the PRSP and related documents around six issues or questions on trade policy, PRSP and poverty. This study is also summarized further in Ladd (2003). Another important study asking similar questions was undertaken by NOVIB, Netherlands (van der Borgh and Bieckmann 2002). It reviewed the contents of both the PRSPs and the WB/IMF loan-related documents to examine the extent to which social impact analysis (the PSIA) of trade policy was undertaken in the PRSPs. Almost 30 African PRSPs were also examined by UNCTAD in its 2002 LDC Report (UNCTAD 2002). This work was further reviewed by Oxfam (2004) under a section called trade and PRSPs.

At the risk of missing out on some additional points, the following were the main observations made in these studies:

1. Trade policy issues are sparsely covered in the PRSPs.
2. Agricultural trade issues are covered even less, despite strong statements on the sector's importance for growth and poverty reduction.

3. The evidence that the PRSPs have considered alternative views and options on trade policy is very weak. As a result, recommendations were uniform across the PRSPs (e.g. always "more" to liberalization, disproportionate emphasis on "exports", and little on trade policy issues and importables or foods).
4. Analysis of the trade-poverty linkages, including PSIA analysis, is rarely found.
5. Stakeholder consultations were mostly held but were of poor quality, both in coverage of stakeholders (even ministries) and in preparation (which also explains why trade policy alternatives were not addressed well).
6. There were mixed results on national ownership and participation in the PRSP formulation – hence the criticisms of the donors' dominant role in the process.

The above reviews mainly covered older or first generation PRSPs. The earliest of these evolved from around 1999 as a new form of conditionality for debt relief and concessional lending. The emphasis then was on social sectors (health, education) as a way to attack poverty. It is held that for this reason growth and trade contents were lacking. This has been changing with the more recent PRSPs that are focussing on growth issues, and on productive sectors like agriculture and industry. In this regard, a more recent ODI study (Driscoll *et al.* 2007) that reviewed six recent PRSPs for Africa finds that the coverage of trade has improved considerably but its quality remains poor. The PRSP documents were still fairly weak when it came to considering alternative views and policy options on trade and in establishing analytical links between trade and poverty reduction. Likewise, the treatment of trade policies remained unbalanced in the sense that the focus was mostly on export promotion and not on wider trade issues. The PRSPs were also found to have given little attention to incorporating regional approaches to improving competitiveness and trade despite the growing influence of regional policies.

3. Introduction to the case studies

The Terms of Reference for the country case studies included the following: i) review the concept of mainstreaming through expert and stakeholder consultations; ii) review relevant policy documents, notably the PRSP and trade and agricultural policies, with a view to identifying synergies/consistencies and gaps/contradictions; and iii) suggest ideas for improving mainstreaming. What follows briefly introduces the five studies; the next section discusses ideas for improving the process.

The Ghana case study analyses a number of policy documents: the 2006 PRSP (GPRS II), national trade policy, agricultural policy (FASDEP II) and two ECOWAS regional policies. The GPRS II is organized around three pillars, with agriculture-led growth made the core strategy on economic growth and poverty reduction in pillar 1.

The analysis concludes that on the whole there is a fairly high degree of consistency on positions, or mainstreaming, across Ghana's policy frameworks. This

is attributed, to a large extent, to the GPRS II's "agriculture-led growth strategy". Consistent with this, the trade policy presents a balanced approach, with its two parallel strategies of "export-led growth" and "domestic market-led industrialization based on import competition". Primarily because of the second parallel strategy, trade policy is also consistent with agricultural and agro-industry policies. The trade policy provides for essential instruments for these productive sectors, e.g. selective protection, promotion of strategic products and sub-sectors, and safeguards against market disruption through import surges. Ghana thus provides a good model for other countries to learn from in formulating consistent and mainstreamed policies.

Ghana's national policies were formulated prior to finalizing ECOWAS policies (notably, the CET and the agricultural policy, ECOWAP). As a result, there is a need for revisiting the former so as to make them fully consistent with the regional policies. Potential inconsistencies noted in the case study are on national self-sufficiency goals (especially rice), the listing of "strategic" products in view of the ECOWAS list of sensitive products, and national food reserves and price stabilization objectives in an environment of a customs union.

The Tanzania case study utilizes seven policy documents, five of them national (the PRSP, trade policy, DTIS, agricultural policy, and the new Kilimo Kwanza ("Agriculture First")), and two regional (EAC trade policy and EAC food security strategy). The 2005 PRSP (NSGRP) is different from others in that it adopts an "outcome-based" approach where desired outcomes are specified first and followed by strategies, interventions, actors, etc. Trade and agricultural issues are discussed under cluster 1 outcomes. An important feature of the vision on trade is that external trade should stimulate domestic productive capacities and improve competitiveness. This is an important message but is not elaborated well.

Aside from that message, the NSGRP itself is fairly weak on trade content. This is also the view of an ODI review (Driscoll *et al.* 2007) which found that the NSGRP did not have many of the queried trade-related features and so was ranked much lower than other PRSPs reviewed. While lacking on trade issues, the NSGRP does acknowledge the trade policy and its implementation. On this, one question asked in the case study is to what extent a PRSP needs to be enriched on trade issues when there is also a comprehensive trade policy?

Five issues are selected for discussion in the Tanzania case study: targeting "strategic" products; protection and safeguard for import-competing products; role of the grain reserves; export taxation and incentives; and domestic subsidies and incentives. On the whole, the results on policy consistency are mixed, and there is an ample room for improvement in the next revisions of the policy documents.

Nepal's case study reviews at least five key documents, the PRSP and policies on trade (plus the 2003 and 2010 DTISs), agriculture, agribusiness, food security and

industry. Nepal's PRSP differs from typical other PRSPs in that it is a periodic plan (the 11th plan) and looks similar in presentation and content to the previous plans, with numerous sectoral chapters. This makes mainstreaming challenging, i.e. to ensure synergy across policies. The study finds that while various policies share similar visions and goals, there is a substantive disconnect between trade and sectoral policies.

The focus of the trade policy (and the two DTISs) is exclusively on exports while issues on importables are not addressed. Agricultural and industrial policies are more balanced in addressing both sub-sectors. There is also some inconsistency in the listing of special or focus products, even within the trade policy and the 2010 DTIS. The 2009 trade policy lists 19 export products, nine of them agricultural. No such listing is found in the agricultural and agri-business policies while virtually all products are listed in the industrial policy. One question raised in the chapter is whether or not trade policy should be listing priority products that are in the domain of agriculture and industrial policies. This matters greatly for prioritizing public resources, including investment and incentives. The design of a PRSP is also an issue, notably whether it should be similar to the traditional plan or more focussed on 2-3 goals or outcomes as in Ghana and Tanzania.

The Sri Lanka study examines the experiences gained in the PRS process that began in late 1990s. In reviewing the PRSPs, or PRSP-like frameworks, the study illustrates how the political process has influenced the design and orientation of the goals and policies in these documents. For example, in one instance, although the main goal was strengthened focus on poverty, the reform measures mostly addressed exports and liberal economic policies, exactly as in the past. A large number of the CSOs promptly criticized the proposals.

By around 2005, the balance of the political position had shifted away from the previous exclusive focus on liberal policies and export-led growth towards a strategy that also stressed on non-export agriculture, poverty and the role of state. These positions are found in the current PRSP (Ten-year Horizon Development Framework 2006-2016). This strategy calls for refocusing attention to *inter alia* the farm sector and agro-industry, import substitution where required, a bigger role for the state, and active perusal of trade policies, but also recognizes that liberal policies are necessary for growth.

While the new PRSP stresses the need for a more stable and transparent trade policy for the food sector, trade policies in recent years have been fairly unstable (frequent changes in tariffs). This points to some serious challenges in mainstreaming trade policies. The source of this problem seems to be an over-reliance on trade instruments to address the interests of too many economic agents (producers, consumers and processors) at the same time, without making efforts to identify alternative non-trade instruments. This also points to the need for formulating trade and sectoral (agriculture and industry) policies together by the same team.

The Bangladesh case study examines trade policy positions in a series of recent documents: interim PRSP and 2004 PRSP; import and export policy orders; and national food policy. One question asked was whether the PRSP has shaped more recent policy documents impinging on trade policy. The interim PRSP was prepared under the constraints of time and adequate consultations and so a number of gaps were identified, one of them being lack of attention to future trade policy.

The trade dimension of the PRSP, and of the two trade orders, are found to have squarely focused on supporting identified export sub-sectors/products with the objective of generating jobs and reducing poverty. To that extent, the documents are mutually supportive and consistent. But when the interests of food, agriculture and agro-industry sub-sectors are considered, the treatment of trade policy appears rather narrow in both the PRSP and trade documents. Naturally, the concerns of these sub-sectors are addressed well by the national food policy, but it fails to articulate the support these sub-sectors will need from trade policy. In this sense, there is a disconnect between the two sets of policy documents. Lack of inter-ministerial dialogues and weakness in stakeholder consultations appear to be key reasons for the problem. Although no documentation was available in the public domain for review of these processes, notably the issues raised (and not raised), background works for this paper indicate that this seems to be the case.

4. Conclusions - towards mainstreamed policy frameworks

Section 2.2 listed several issues on trade mainstreaming. These were one set of questions asked in undertaking the country case studies. Additional issues were identified during the background works. What follows summarizes the key suggestions made in the country case studies with a view to improving the process of mainstreaming. The first two points address two substantive issues, mainstreaming and trade content in a PRSP, and the rest three make additional suggestions.

A sequential process of trade policy formulation improves mainstreaming

Trade agenda in modern times has become comprehensive. The volume on the Legal Texts of the results of the WTO Uruguay Round negotiations is 558 pages long, and, even for one agreement, the Doha Round draft Modalities for the Agreement on Agriculture is 108 pages. Likewise, the scope of Aid for Trade is very comprehensive. National trade policies similarly try to cover many topics.

But not all the elements of the trade agenda are divisive, nor mainstreaming a challenge or an issue in each and every case.

For example, on the first point, the trade agenda covers many topics such as trade facilitation (e.g. better customs), SPS/TBT (improved food standards), Green Box measures (irrigation, research, training), intellectual property rights, trade promotion, trade-related legislations, trade negotiations, and so on. These are mostly sector-neutral development activities that are essential for any economy, and it is relatively easy to reach a consensus, e.g. the state needs to deliver on or facilitate the provision of these services (and typically, more is better than less). The issue could be on prioritizing activities within each of these measures in view of the resource constraint but not on the provision of the service itself.

But this is not the case for many other areas such as on tariffs and contingency protection, export taxes and domestic subsidies. These are divisive issues within countries as are in the Doha Round negotiations. The two notable features of these policies are: i) these are divisive in nature with different views in societies; and ii) these are very product- and sub-sector-specific (e.g. protection for rice, subsidy for fruits). Many of the issues on mainstreaming discussed in the five case studies are on account of these two features.

For example, one recurring observation was the disproportionate attention given by national trade policies to exports and much less to import-competing sub-sectors (food, agro-industry) while agriculture and agro-industry policies, and to a large extent the PRSP, had a more balanced position. Thus, it is said in Ghana's 2004 trade policy that restrictions in the import regime can lead to investment in protected sectors rather than in sectors for which Ghana can be competitive. In trade theory, this idea comes from the Lerner Symmetry which essentially says (under some assumptions) that there should be no import protection at all for a fully export-oriented trade regime. Confusion or inconsistency arises when one policy document advocates an extreme form of export-orientation while others reject that. In Ghana's case, however, the national trade policy does not push this viewpoint to the extreme and there are trade provisions for import-competing sectors. What is important is that a PRSP needs to provide clear views on divisive issues like this so that subsidiary policies do not take different positions but reinforce the common view.

One of the important findings from the country case studies is that when it comes to trade policies for the productive sectors, a sequential process of policy formulation improves mainstreaming considerably. To start with, a PRSP needs to provide clear guidance and provisions on trade policy needs of the productive sectors, but it is not practical for a PRSP to get into the details. Therefore, in practice, the process should begin with sectoral policies (agriculture, agro-industry). It is here where specific needs for support from the trade side would be identified, including policy needs (e.g. an appropriate tariff structure for the product value chain) and support measures (e.g. investment, incentives). Identification of priority or special products and sub-sectors would also take place in the sectoral papers. Clear criteria will be needed for this work and these should be provided in the PRSP itself. These criteria

could include, for example, contributions to growth and poverty reduction and food security, maximization of backward and forward linkages (as said in Nepal's PRSP), inclusiveness etc.[1] It is only after these details are determined that the trade policy should be worked out as a support policy. This sequential process should minimize many of the mainstreaming problems observed in the case studies. For example, this is one reason why there are often different lists of strategic or targeted products for special treatment in the 3-4 key national policy frameworks. This is also the reason why trade policies tend not to pay adequate attention to the needs of importables while the PRSP and sectoral policies do.

Two examples illustrate this approach. In the approach to the identification of the WTO Agricultural Special Products, the development objectives are specified first (e.g. food and livelihood security, rural development), at the same time taking into consideration the vulnerability of these sub-sectors to further tariff cuts. Although the Special Products negotiations in the Doha Round are limited to tariff only, it is expected that countries will also pay attention to other support measures required for developing the competitiveness of these products (this was indeed the underlying idea behind the original proposal for a Development Box in the Doha negotiations). The last step in this process is for the trade ministry to formulate a trade policy in support of the above needs, as well as to negotiate for the required policy space in the WTO. Ideally, this is also the approach to be followed in preparing a "negative list" for RTAs.

Another illustration would be the process followed in formulating the EU agricultural trade policies in the 1960s and 1970s. The process began with the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP). Given the goals and policies of the CAP, there was a need for a set of specific trade policies which were formulated subsequently. When the CAP policies were changed (e.g. in 1992 and 2003), trade policies were also changed accordingly. Thus, there was a specific sequence to the process followed and which ensured that trade policy was consistent with agricultural policy.

Improving the trade content in the PRSPs

In addition to ensuring mainstreaming, the question asked is how much of the trade topics should be covered by a PRSP? This is also an issue discussed in the case studies and also identified in PRSP evaluation studies (see Section 2.2). Four weaknesses in particular are identified: i) sparse coverage of trade policy issues in PRSPs (more so for agricultural trade issues); ii) little evidence of having considered alternative

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[1] It is very common to find in trade and other national policy documents statements like "products and sub-sectors will be identified on the basis of comparative advantages in trade", or even "government will facilitate the provision of support to strategic productive sectors based on clear and transparent criteria", but rarely clarified and explained what these mean in practice. See one commentary below on this.

views/policy options; iii) imbalance in addressing the needs of both exportables and importables, often equating "trade" with "export"; and iv) inadequate attention given to trade-poverty linkages in policy choice. The Driscoll *et al.* 2007 review was based on 16 questions asked on the trade content, similar to the 2003 study by Hewitt and Gillson.

Being an apex development framework, a PRSP needs to address many issues and cover many areas, and so there is a limit to which it can devote space to trade issues. That is why typically there is a PRSP as well as a trade policy. In the case studies, with the exception of Nepal, the PRSPs do not have a separate chapter on trade policy but trade issues appear in several (typically 4-5) places, notably in sections on macroeconomics, private sector competitiveness, international economic diplomacy, and sectoral policies (e.g. agriculture and industry). It is difficult to say if that is adequate or not. The weakness does not seem to lie on the number of pages or wordage but on the quality of the messages provided, as discussed in detail in the case studies. Ideally, a PRSP should provide guidance on trade strategies and key trade policy issues and leave the details to the trade policy. To give an example, Ghana's PRSP is considered better than the other three (not counting Nepal)[2] in terms of the space or wordage on trade issues. Tanzania's PRSP devotes much less space relatively. But both are considered better than others on one very important basis – the guidance they provided was balanced in addressing trade issues in a holistic manner as both stress on the role of external trade in stimulating domestic markets and import-competing sectors. This is articulated even more clearly in Ghana's case with its "agriculture-led growth strategy" and two parallel strategies.

On the fourth point above, the case studies show that the PRSPs (and national trade policies) are fairly weak in demonstrating that trade-poverty linkages were considered in articulating strategies and policies. This was also the finding of the Driscoll *et al.* review of six PRSPs. The question again is how much of this can be done in a PRSP? Ideally, positions taken on trade policies in a PRSP are supposed to be based on poverty and social impact analysis (the PSIA), including stakeholder consultations, that would inform not only broader policy positions but also identify potential products/sub-sectors that contribute most to growth and poverty reduction and which need to be targeted for development. The conclusion from the case studies is that while it is not feasible for a PRSP to devote much space to these analyses, it is essential that a PRSP summarizes the findings to justify the positions taken, or not taken, citing the studies and making them available in the public domain. It is a fact that despite two decades or so of experiences with liberal economic policies, most societies continue to debate on the trade-poverty linkages.

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[2] Nepal's PRSP is also a traditional periodic plan and thus has many sectoral chapters, including one for trade. This differs from most PRSPs in other countries. The Nepal case study suggests that this format poses difficult challenges for ensuring mainstreaming.

A PRSP (and trade policy) needs to demonstrate that these debates have been considered. This will avoid policy reversals with each new government and thus contribute to improving consistency across policy frameworks. Effective stakeholder consultation is integral to this process.

Given the increasing significance of RTAs and regional policies, the case studies also review how the PRSPs and national trade and other policies have addressed these issues. The overall finding is that the current PRSPs and trade policies are fairly week on this point. In some cases, one reason for this is that the PRSPs and trade policies were formulated some years prior to new developments in regional agreements and policies (e.g. ECOWAS CET and ECOWAP for Ghana, EAC customs union for Tanzania). In South Asia, it seems that SAFTA is not considered to be of much significance for trade to be given attention. But Nepal's PRSP and trade policy should have given due attention to trade issues with India in view of the significant bilateral trade but that was not done. The conclusion is that the policy frameworks need to pay much more attention to regional trade issues than is the case now. This was also the finding of the Driscoll *et al.* review of the six PRSPs.

Improving the process of targeting strategic or priority products/sub-sectors for special treatment

Policy documents of all five countries (and many other countries too) reveal governments' desire to promote targeted sub-sectors and products, notably for exports. This is most explicit for Ghana, Tanzania and Nepal. In Ghana's GPRS II and trade policy, this is found in several places under different names - "strategic exports", products in the President's initiatives, promoting new areas of competitive advantages (cotton, oil palm and cassava starch), identification and targeting of specific sectors for development, and selective intervention to stabilize prices of strategic products. The ECOWAP/CAADP Compact also identifies a number of products (millet/sorghum, maize and rice, roots and tubers, fruit and vegetables, and meat and dairy products) for intra-trade through regional value chains. As noted in Section 3 above, Nepal's trade policy has targeted 19 export products, nine of them agricultural. In the case of Tanzania, the PRSP calls for developing a detailed strategy focussed on specific products/services based on competitive advantages. The Kilimo Kwanza also supports such a strategy of prioritization. But other policy frameworks are less explicit on this, e.g. agricultural policy, the DTIS and trade policy. The EAC has also listed 31 agricultural tariff lines as being sensitive.

A number of comments can be made on this strategy. First, it is essential that all policy frameworks endorse that idea and importantly point to a similar if not identical listing. Second, the number of such products needs to be considerably reduced to avoid spreading "special treatments" too thinly. Third, the criteria for listing such products need to be clearly specified, most importantly in the PRSP itself, so that there is a minimum chance of list-reversals when new governments

come or to avoid political pressures favouring one product over other. And fourth, there is a lack of clarity and/or specificity on the special treatment to be accorded to these products, both in terms of policy (e.g. tariff protection, export tax, VAT) and investment at various points in the value chain.

Stakeholder consultations need to be much more effective for improving mainstreaming

While stakeholder consultations are becoming the norm for policy formulation, what makes these processes effective is their quality. All case studies discuss consultations to a varying extent, including in the papers on trade policy and support measures. Considerable efforts were made in the case studies to document the quality side of the consultation. In addition, for Nepal and Sri Lanka, separate background studies were undertaken on the issue of the use of analysis or evidence in that process.

   To summarize those observations, while the dates and venues of many of those meetings held in the past could be obtained, there was virtually no record (available for review) on the quality side. In one case, Ghana, a trade policy "Options" paper was prepared that recorded alternative views on all policy issues covered (e.g. whether or not to tax exports). During the background works in the five case study countries, alternative views on policy issues were voiced in such consultations, which also reveal that all societies do have different views on issues but are not always listened to in the formal consultations. The problem is with the process followed for the consultations. Two problems in particular need to be addressed. One is to ensure that the process is inclusive, i.e. all important stakeholders having different views are invited. The second is for the organizer to do more home work, namely prepare briefs/analyses outlining alternative positions and their implications, and make these briefs available to participants before the meetings.

   These weaknesses also apply to inter-ministerial/agency meetings. The case studies show that the quality of participation of the ministries/agencies other than the lead ministry is typically poor. This could be for a number of reasons - limited interest on the subject of the official attending, position of the official attending (e.g. a junior officer while the rest are senior, thus limiting participation in the discussion), lack of familiarity due to poor preparation, lack of background analyses on the issues discussed, and so on. These were systemic weaknesses of the process in all five country cases. This is also a problem that is not too difficult to overcome.

Need for clarifying terminologies used in various national policy papers

The case studies show that one of the reasons for some inconsistencies across national policies is the use of concepts and terminologies that are not clearly defined and thus variously interpreted by stakeholders, including different ministries

and the private sector. One example is "comparative and competitive advantages in trade", terms that the trade policies in all five countries have used but not defined. Another is "food security" which perhaps tops the list of such misunderstood concepts. The concept is understood variously, notably national self sufficiency by some and household economic access to food by others. These two interpretations do have very different policy implications. In one national policy document, it is said that export restrictions will be justified for food security. The ECOWAP uses the term "food sovereignty" without defining it clearly. Highly divisive debates have taken place on trade and food security when linked to food sovereignty. Mainstreaming suffers when different people interpret the terms differently.

The following is a sample of some commonly used terms and concepts found in various policy documents that are not defined clearly (emphasis added): *"protecting sensitive industries", "ensure a reasonable level of protection", "protection to all domestic producers on a sectoral basis", "special, sensitive and strategic commodities", "NTBs may be resorted to on the basis of social welfare", "food security could be one of the criteria to justify export controls", "government will facilitate the provision of support to strategic productive sectors based on clear and transparent criteria", and "improving competitiveness of agro-processing through economies of scale production and improved technology".*

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