

**Summary report of STDF Working Group Meeting  
29 June 2007**

1. The meeting was chaired by Margaret Miller (WHO), and held at WTO headquarters in Geneva. The Secretary informed the meeting that the Irish mission to the WTO was attending as an observer. He stated that UNIDO had been admitted to the Working Group as a permanent observer member, but was not able to attend on this occasion. He noted that the World Bank indicated that it would not be able to attend the meeting.

**Adoption of the agenda**

2. The agenda was adopted with amendments, notably the removal of project "STDF 108: Institutional Capacity of Countries in the Americas" from consideration under agenda point 9 (a). This project was to be reconsidered by the Working Group if letters of support from all countries involved had not been received, however, the last outstanding letter of support was received just prior to the meeting.

**Report by the Secretariat on operation of the Facility**

3. The Secretary provided an overview of the main activities undertaken since the last Working Group. He noted that a framework agreement concerning the implementation and supervision of STDF projects had been concluded with the FAO. Conclusion of the FAO agreement was expected to facilitate the implementation of four outstanding projects awaiting contracting. Similar agreements were at an advanced stage of preparation with the World Bank and the International Trade Centre (ITC).

4. The Secretary noted that seven missions had been undertaken in support of five project preparation grants (PPGs) and two projects. Furthermore, three meetings had been organized with donors as part of the new funding strategy. Geneva briefings had also been provided to the Committee on Trade and Development and the Sub-Committee on Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Briefings had also been held for the Geneva delegations of countries included as pilot case studies for STDF 175.

5. The Secretary reported that the deadline for applications for the two STDF posts had closed on 12 June. Arrangements for the recruitment were progressing well and it was hoped that the posts would be filled after the summer break. The Secretary recalled that further strengthening of the Secretariat would be included in a multi-year operating plan for the STDF to be prepared during the summer months. He underlined the need to maintain the positive synergies with the Enhanced Integrated Framework and highlighted the possibility of recruiting a temporary staff member using the Dutch trainee programme.

6. Improvements of the STDF website were noted by the Secretary. It was agreed by the Working Group that a password protected site would be created on which meeting documents could be posted. The Secretariat was requested to make the necessary arrangements with the World Bank web master. It was agreed that only final documents would appear on the public site.

**STDF Regional Consultations on SPS-related technical co-operation (STDF-175)**

7. The Secretary introduced this agenda item, noting changes which had been made to the STDF 175 work programme to foster a link with the Aid for Trade Initiative. He noted that the work had been extended in scope to cover three countries in the Mekong Delta (Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam) and more clearly separated into two phases. The first phase was based on stocktaking of past flows of SPS technical co-operation, a literature overview of publicly available SPS evaluations

and case studies and identification of SPS-related needs by the countries surveyed. This research would be presented at the pre-day workshops planned for the three regional Aid for Trade events. Although there would be a specific geographic focus to the case studies, the pre-day events would be open to all participants of the Aid for Trade events. The second phase would involve the identification of parameters of good practice, selection of a project sample for each region on which to conduct further research, fieldwork research, synthesis of external and countries evaluations, prioritization of needs and contact with donors. Stage two would culminate in three regional activities for the case study countries.

8. The Working Group welcomed the linkage with the Aid for Trade Initiative. It was agreed that a consultant should be commissioned to examine the issue of benchmarks for good practice in the provision of SPS-related technical assistance. A point of departure for this work was the OECD's Paris Principles on Aid Effectiveness. It was agreed that the consultant would present his or her work at the next STDF Working Group.

9. Another issue which arose in the discussion of the Secretariat's revised document was the prioritization of SPS needs by beneficiaries and the need for criteria to undertake such a prioritization. It was recalled that countries needed to determine their own prioritization, but that there was a role for the STDF Secretariat as a centre of excellence to assist in this process. The importance of including the private sector in this prioritization exercise was stressed. FAO and IPPC recalled that they had developed tools which could assist countries in the prioritization of their own needs. STDF project 20 "Country-based plans for SPS-related development" was also relevant with respect to the quantification of benefits arising from investment in SPS-related infrastructure and the difficulties encountered in quantification of non-trade related benefits and costs.

10. The Secretariat noted that it was attempting to include some estimation of the assistance provided through the private sector as part of the research work in the case study countries. Several Working Group members highlighted this avenue as a route for the provision of technical assistance, particularly against the background of the growing impact of private standards. It was recalled that since private sector assistance was not reported through the WTO-OECD Trade Capacity Building Database, there were difficulties in capturing these private sector aid flows.

11. The Secretariat noted that the rule of the STDF on membership and observer status placed the Secretariat in an awkward position vis-à-vis the pilot countries being surveyed. The Secretariat had sought to brief the countries on the work programme and had held briefings for delegations. However, there was no representation of these countries in the STDF. Various suggestions were made in this regard (e.g. transmitting their views to the Working Group, holding a separate informal meeting or inviting them to attend the Working Group as observers). In the absence of any agreed conclusion the Working Group requested the Secretariat to make recommendations for the next STDF Working Group. It was suggested that this process could be handled at the same time as the selection of the new in-coming beneficiary representatives. The interest of the Sub-Committee on Least Developed Countries in including an LDC representative in the STDF was also noted.

#### **STDF funding strategy (STDF 186)**

12. The Secretariat introduced document STDF 186, which set out a funding strategy based around three main actions:

- Raising the profile of the STDF;
- Building on the Enhanced Integrated Framework and Aid for Trade initiatives; and
- Pursuing contacts with existing and potential donors through Geneva meetings and national briefings.

13. The Secretariat noted that a number of bilateral meetings had taken place to date. The representative of Germany thanked the Secretariat for providing a briefing for decision-makers in Berlin and noted its utility in galvanizing interest in the work of the Facility. He recommended that further such briefings take place, although he recognized that they were time-consuming. The European Commission offered to organize a briefing on the STDF which would assist in awareness-raising across all 27 EC member States.

14. FAO underlined that the current funding situation was not promising and made it difficult for the Secretariat to plan. He proposed that the other partners in the STDF assist in the fundraising effort - a point echoed by WTO. It was recalled that STDF projects themselves provided an opportunity to publicize the Facility. The importance of publicity materials was underlined.

15. The Secretariat reported that it was working on the development of a number of training materials (in particular videos) and would request the WTO's in-house graphic designer to give some thought to a logo for the STDF. Various options for a logo would be presented to the next STDF Working Group meeting.

### **Project evaluations**

#### ***STDF 14: Development of the OIE Capacity Evaluation tool (Performance Vision Strategy)***

16. Mr Bazeley introduced his report by noting the context in which the evaluation had taken place and recalling that it was neither an evaluation of the OIE, nor of the capacity evaluation tool (Performance Vision Strategy or PVS) in use. The grant from the STDF had been small, a total of \$37,000. This seed funding had contributed to a high quality product, but the development of the tool had been completely overtaken by the avian influenza crisis and the response to this animal health emergency. He suggested that support for the development of this tool should be considered as general budgetary support, rather than as specifically tied to certain outputs. The influx of funds from other sources for the development and application of the PVS, notably a \$25 million grant from the World Bank, meant that the STDF funding could be considered as one first step in a broader strategy. This made the evaluation problematic notably with respect to attributing inputs and outputs.

17. Mr Bazeley suggested that the evaluation of the development of the tool raised a number of interesting questions for discussion. Sustainability was one question high on his list. A series of project interventions, notably the PACE and PARK programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa, had enjoyed considerable success. However with both programmes coming to an end, major questions have been raised regarding the long-term sustainability of the project outcomes. The key issue to address in this context was one of institutional incentives to foster behavioural change at a governmental level so as to understand and value the role of veterinary services. In this context, he noted that the PVS had the potential to "change the rules of the game".

18. Mr Bazeley noted the PVS concept as developed by IICA was an inclusive self-evaluation exercise involving multiple stakeholders on the basis of shared benchmarks. However, the PVS as revised by the OIE was conceived as an evaluation against an external benchmark – the OIE codes. It was a "one-size fits all" approach with fragile cause and effect linkages. In Mr Bazeley's opinion, the tool did not consider the broader social and economic situation in a country and did not address the underlying constraints or needs, notably of behavioural change at an institutional level. As such, he considered the tool a "missed opportunity" to redress underlying institutional incentives. He also highlighted the copyright which the OIE had established over its version of the PVS tool.

19. The evaluator highlighted a general trend among international organizations towards growth in extra-budgetary resources and relative decline in core funding. He noted that the surge of interest in animal health issues generated by avian influenza had highlighted a need for better co-ordination of

effort among donors to the OIE if duplication and inefficiency in use of donor resources was to be avoided. Finally, he recalled that the International Standardisation Organization (ISO) had developed a standard on the topic of evaluation which could be appropriate to consider from a quality control perspective. (A copy of Mr Bazeley's power point presentation is included in ANNEX II.)

20. Commenting on Mr Bazeley's evaluation, the OIE circulated a written position as a room document. Speaking to this OIE position, the representative of the OIE, Dr. Sibartie, questioned if Mr Bazeley had kept to his terms of reference as the evaluation touched on many issues which were not related to the development of the PVS tool. Many of these comments the OIE considered irrelevant, notably where these touched on the OIE as an organization. Dr Sibartie noted that although resources had been received from a number of sources for the development of the tool, due attribution had been given to the STDF. There was a need to differentiate between the development and the application of the tool.

21. Dr Sibartie clarified that the PVS tool could be applied as a self-evaluation. He highlighted the example of Sudan as an OIE member which had applied the PVS on a self-evaluation basis. It was up to OIE member countries to decide if they opted for a self-evaluation or a third party evaluation with OIE certified evaluators. The PVS was in no case imposed on a country. He highlighted the positive impact which the PVS evaluation could have on developing countries and contested the contention of Mr Bazeley that by failing to address the underlying institutional constraints, developing countries could potentially be left worse off.

22. The OIE disagreed that the project inputs and outputs could not be easily related. In point of fact, the OIE had provided much better value for money than set out in the project document. He noted that the workshop in Mali at which the PVS had been discussed had been attended by more than 20 African countries. OIE noted that as an independently established international organization it had no obligation to follow ISO standards. He highlighted the role of the OIE's own codes and stated that there were objections on the part of a number of OIE members to the use of ISO standards.

23. In conclusion, the representative of the OIE requested that amendments be made to the evaluation report and suggested that the matter could be included on the agenda of the next STDF Policy Committee meeting.

24. In discussion of the evaluation, lessons for the STDF were highlighted, notably in respect of project cycle management and reporting obligations of implementing organizations. It was recalled that the project had been commissioned when STDF had fledging procedures in place, and the new STDF operational rules addressed many of the problems which had been identified. However, the evaluation highlighted the need for clear terms of reference with well-defined objectives and outputs.

***STDF 37: Assistance to developing countries in the implementation of ISPM 15 (Guidelines for regulating wood packaging material in international trade.)***

25. Dr Breukers introduced her evaluation by providing some background on the development of the ISPM 15 standard and the difficulties faced by countries in applying this standard. She noted that the centrepiece of the project was a workshop on how to apply the ISPM 15 standard. Funding had been sought to bring developing country participants to the workshop. Her research had considered issues related to this participation by developing countries in the workshop, rather than the ISPM 15 standard itself.

26. Dr Breukers highlighted the key lessons arising from her evaluation. In particular, there appeared to be a statistically significant relationship between adoption of ISPM 15 at national level and attendance at the workshop. Implementation of ISPM 15 had increased strongly after the February-March 2005 workshop. Among the 52 respondents to the evaluation questionnaire, there

was a general consensus that this project had provided a very useful opportunity for information exchange and interactive learning. It had been a highly effective and sustainable means to achieve the desired capacity building objective: implementation of ISPM 15 by developing countries. The only questions raised by the evaluator on the basis of the questionnaire replies were with respect to the accessibility of workshop information and the suitability of the internet-based training and information for some developing countries.

27. From the responses to the evaluation questionnaire, it was clear that the project could be followed up with further training programmes at either national or regional level. She suggested that the training materials could also be published in paper or CD-rom format. (A copy of Dr. Breuker's powerpoint presentation is included as ANNEX III).

28. In response, the IPPC noted that every effort had been made to ensure the availability of the training resources, notably through publicity given by the Secretariat during the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures and other meetings. He noted the IPPC's interest in printing the training materials in hard copy, but highlighted that a further budget provision should be made available for this task.

29. Some questions were raised with respect to the statistical association between workshop attendance and implementation on the basis that the sample could be in some way be biased through self-selection. However, Dr Breukers stated that the calculation had not been corrected for this possibility. It was agreed that the cost of dissemination of project materials should in future be included in project budgets. The structure of the evaluation report, with its section on key lessons learnt, was also commended.

***STDF 56: Capacity Building for Implementation of the Codex Alimentarius Code of Good Practice for Animal Feeding***

30. Dr Rollier introduced her evaluation by providing some background on the objectives and outputs of STDF 56, which were primarily based around the organization of workshops and the development of a manual based on the Codex code of good practice for animal feeding. Her first conclusion was that audit procedures had been poorly handled, perhaps because these requirements had not been clearly communicated or understood by the applicant. Although the workshops had taken place, the absence of both any workshop proceedings and a detailed audit trail made it difficult to establish how funds had been used. In this regard, the concept of providing "seed" money needed to be better explained.

31. The evaluator noted that the manual based on the Codex code was still in draft form. The current draft dated from October 2006 and had not been subsequently updated. She highlighted that it was paramount that this manual be fine-tuned, notably with respect to inaccuracies in terms and commonly used references, and completed – a point underlined by the respondents to the evaluation questionnaire.

32. Dr Rollier highlighted some positive impacts of the project, in particular in the formation of regional groupings of national feed industry associations and the spur which the workshops had given to the formation of new national feed industry associations. She suggested that the formation and support of these associations could be one area where further support might be considered. One particular question with respect to the training and manual was the ability of small feed producers to conform to the Codex guidelines. This, she suggested, was an area where further work could be directed. In conclusion, she stated that there were a number of lessons to be learnt for the STDF arising from the project, notably the need for more robust analysis of intervention logic (cause-and-effect relationships) and external risks and assumptions when funding STDF projects. Objectively verifiable indicators of progress needed to be clearly stated in project documents.

33. In reply, Mr Gilbert of the International Feed Industry Federation thanked the STDF for the faith it had shown in his organization by approving the STDF project. He welcomed the report as accurate and to the point. He underlined that the objectives of the project had been achieved with the manual nearly complete and four training workshops having taken place. He highlighted the role of FAO in the project and recalled that a Memorandum of Understanding existed between FAO and the IFIF. Since the manual needed the input of national feed industry associations, it had taken longer than anticipated to finalize.

34. Commenting on the evaluation report, the FAO sympathized with the problems encountered in finalizing a manual which provided interpretation of a Codex text. Mr Boutrif noted that including comments from the eventual beneficiaries was desirable, if time consuming. He recalled that the FAO was currently peer reviewing the manual. The Working Group recommended that FAO and IFIF should agree on a deadline to finalize the manual and agreed that both the manual and reports should be in the public domain and that no party should seek copyright on the final manual.

### **General conclusions on issues arising from the evaluations**

35. It was agreed by the Working Group that lessons should be drawn from all three project evaluations and compiled in a document to be provided to the next meeting's Working Group and Policy Committee. The Secretariat concluded that the evaluations pointed to a need for strengthened project cycle management by beneficiaries, better oversight by the STDF and partner organizations and reporting to the Working Group. It was also clear that there should be better attribution of funding to the STDF. If the STDF was to take forward its role as a centre of excellence it had to take lessons on-board. It was noted that the new operational rules had addressed many of the concerns expressed in the evaluation. For example, eligibility criteria had been strengthened along with reporting requirements and projects would only be implemented with a third party overseeing implementation. However, the Secretariat was requested to judge if further actions were necessary and recommend changes to the operational rules to the Policy Committee.

### **Evaluation of funding applications**

#### ***STDF 105 rev1: Compartmentalization***

36. **Project preparation grant STDF 105 was approved for funding by the Working Group, subject to identification by the OIE of a beneficiary and the receipt of related letters of support.** It was agreed that if these elements had not been provided by the time of the next meeting approval for the PPG would be withdrawn. A budget envelope of \$20,000 was approved.

37. In discussion of the PPG application, a member of the Working Group voiced some concern in relation to project cycle management and the eventual demand for the project. In reply, the OIE noted that the disease situation of the country could completely close down trade. Applying compartmentalization could open trade, not least because the application of the concept required close public-private partnership. Another member of the Working Group expressed interest in working with the OIE to define the PPG and related project development activities.

#### ***STDF 191: Enhancing Sierra Leone's Competitiveness through improved SPS national capacity***

38. **Project preparation grant STDF 191 was approved for funding by the Working Group.** It was agreed that the Secretariat would work with the applicant to address the points raised by Working Group members. These points included the absence of letters of support and the lack of specificity in the terms of reference. Concerns were also raised about the role of the Bureau of Standards and the need to include all appropriate stakeholders in the PPG activities, in particular the national Codex Committee. It was important that the PPG did not create a confusion between

mandates of various national bodies and the choice of consultant was felt important in this regard. The Secretariat clarified that it would liaise with the partners before presenting a shortlist of consultants to the authorities in Sierra Leone. Members of the Working Group highlighted synergies with other on-going projects, notably an EC funded project being implemented by UNIDO.

***STDF 185: Incentives for private sector SPS compliance in Pakistan***

39. **The Working Group requested the applicant to resubmit its application.** Several issues were identified by the Working Group, notably that letters of support were missing, that there was absence of information on other initiatives and how an eventual project would fit with these other initiatives (in particular a joint World Bank/UNIDO project). Further detail was required on the incentive scheme which the authorities were seeking to develop. In addition, it was not clear which ASEAN countries Pakistan wished to learn from by comparing their experience. In conclusion, the applicant was invited to resubmit after having provided much greater detail and addressed the problems identified by the Working Group in respect of meeting STDF criteria.

***STDF 126: Support for Establishment of the Horticulture Development Council of Tanzania***

40. **Project STDF 126 was approved by the Working Group, but it was decided that the project could be funded outside the STDF.** The Secretariat was mandated to explore funding opportunities for the project with donors in-country, including the necessary budgetary provision. In this context, it was noted that the project had been developed from a priority action identified within the Integrated Framework Diagnostic Trade Integration Study of Tanzania. Some members of the Working Group highlighted that similar associations had been able to establish themselves without donor funding. It was agreed that the Secretariat would report back on progress in matching the project with a donor at the next Working Group meeting.

***STDF 100: Strengthening the national food control system in the fisheries sector in Cape Verde***

41. **Project STDF 100 was approved by the Working Group, but it was decided that the project could be funded outside the STDF.** The Secretariat highlighted the potential interest of a number of donors in funding the project. The Working Group mandated the Secretariat to follow-up with donors in-country and agreed the necessary budgetary provision. A number of shortcomings were however highlighted by members of the Working Group. It was suggested that these be addressed before the project be presented to donors.

***STDF 188: HACCP plan development in the fish sector in Senegal and Mauritania***

42. The Working Group took note of the comments made by the Secretariat in its review of the project and invited the applicant to resubmit the project for its next meeting.

***STDF 69 rev.1: Capacity building for safety of Yemeni Seafood products.***

43. **The Working Group approved the project subject to finalization of implementation arrangements between the ITC, WTO and the applicant.** The Secretariat clarified that the project was complimentary to other capacity building activities in the fisheries sector in Yemen. Several members of the Working Group raised potential concerns and suggested that the applicant might need assistance to implement the project, rather than just oversight by ITC. One Member presented the Working Group with technical comments on the proposal. It was suggested that shrimp aquaculture should be incorporated in the project terms of reference. The need for a letter of support from the Ministry of Fish Wealth and provision for an end-of-project external evaluation were also highlighted.

***STDF 194: Supporting implementation of SPS standards in Burkina Faso***

44. **The Working Group requested that the applicant resubmit the project or a PPG request for the next Working Group.** Basic problems such as the absence of letters of support, the absence of evidence of project cycle management and other fundamental flaws in project design were highlighted by the Working Group. Furthermore, the Working Group disagreed with the Secretariat advice to consider funding a PPG, instead requesting that more specific information should be provided for a PPG application, notably with respect to the avoidance of duplication of effort.

*STDF 195: Developing an SPS regional framework for ECOWAS*

45. **The Working Group requested that the applicant resubmit the project or a PPG request for the next Working Group.** The same basic problems as for project STDF 194 were highlighted, such as the absence of letters of support, the absence of evidence of project cycle management and other fundamental flaws in project design. In this context, the Working Group again disagreed with the Secretariat advice to consider funding a PPG, instead requesting that more specific information should be provided for a PPG application, notably with respect to the avoidance of duplication of effort. It was noted that the project could potentially be funded from other sources.

46. The discussion of projects STDF 194 and 195 prompted a reflection on the part of the Working Group that it was important to apply minimum criteria for PPGs. These included clear objectives for PPGs, letters of support and realistic time frameworks. In this sense, PPGs should be treated as small projects.

**Overview of implementation of on-going projects**

*STDF 13: Development of regional Actions Plans for Selected African regions to enhance veterinary services*

47. The Secretariat informed the Working Group that the project had been placed on the agenda due to implementation delays which had meant that the anticipated completion date of March 2007 had not been met. The Secretariat highlighted that it considered the implementation timetable for the project as overly-ambitious.

48. The OIE provided information on the problems encountered in implementation of the project. It stated that three of the five components of the project had been completed, but that the project had encountered delays not of its own making and some difficulties due to the actions of some of the beneficiaries. Dr Sibartie pointed to the lack of availability of the consultants as one problem encountered and underlined the OIE's willingness to proceed with new consultants to ensure the completion of the project. The OIE was of the opinion that a further year was required to reach the project outcome and assured the Working Group of its willingness to do everything possible to make the project a success.

49. Members of the Working Group expressed concern at the delays reported by OIE. One member of the Working Group questioned if an extension would result in a satisfactory outcome. In that member's view, the difficulties encountered could have been spotted earlier and corrective actions taken. In the absence of any project documentation, the Working Group was unanimous in agreeing that it was impossible to reach a decision on whether or not to grant an extension. It was agreed that the decision should be taken by the Secretariat on whether or not to grant the extension on the basis of a detailed report outlining the current status of the project, a full statement of actual expenditure to date and a detailed work plan for completion of the project - including a judgement on the likely outcome.



50. A general conclusion drawn by the Working Group was that consideration should be given to the development of consistent procedures to be followed when such problems were encountered.

***STDF 133: Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation in the Pacific region***

51. After explanation by the Secretariat and FAO, the Working Group agreed the provision of monitoring services by the FAO and the necessary budgetary supplement to project STDF 133.

**Information on partner and donor activities**

52. It was agreed that the Secretariat would circulate all documents tabled at the SPS Committee which might be of potential interest to the STDF Working Group. This included information on technical co-operation activities by the US and the EC.

**Election of Chair and Vice-Chair**

53. The Working Group expressed its thanks to the WHO for chairing the Working Group for the past year. It also extended its thanks to the three beneficiary representatives for their active participation over the past 18 months.

54. The Working Group elected the OIE as chair of the Working Group for a one year term.

55. Although the WTO indicated that it would be prepared to serve as vice-chair of the Facility, it preferred to see if another candidate, preferably a donor member, might not be found by the time of the next Working Group meeting. Election of the vice chair was postponed to the next meeting.

**Other business**

56. The Secretariat agreed to inform the Working Group of the date of its next meeting after consultation with the OIE. It was recalled that the OIE had offered to host the next meeting of both the Working Group and Policy Committee in Paris. The Secretariat agreed that more time would need to be provided for the next Working Group meeting. It was also recalled that, in accordance with the updated operational rules, donor members would need to agree on a new donor rotation mechanism for the Policy Committee.

**12. Close of meeting**

**ANNEX I**  
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