

SECTION 2. METHODOLOGY¹⁴

2.1 INCEPTION PHASE

The inception report was prepared based on a review of available documentation on the STDF from the website and N drive of the Secretariat, as well as interviews with the STDF Secretariat staff between 4 and 5 September 2018. This culminated in the development and elaboration of the evaluation questions and assessment criteria presented in ANNEX 5 of this report and submission of an inception report. The Evaluation Steering Group reviewed the report and provided 90 comments from Working Group members that were addressed and a revised report prepared. A further 19 comments were provided as feedback on the second draft that were again considered and a final draft inception report prepared.¹⁵ Written approval of the inception report was received from the chairperson of the STDF Working Group on 25 October 2018, allowing the evaluation team to move onto the research phase.

2.2 RESEARCH PHASE

2.2.1 FULL DOCUMENT REVIEW

Having gathered the available documents from the STDF website and catalogue of the N drive during the inception phase (and preliminary review), these documents were examined in more detail in respect of the agreed evaluation framework (provided in ANNEX 5) and relevant evidence selected and extracted to support or contradict the associated indicators. These included results of the survey to the STDF working group members in 2017 and the recent meta-evaluation of STDF projects. Further information (e.g. references in the text found or other documents or where specific reference is made to STDF specific projects or activities) was identified and provided for analysis, following a request for information to the STDF Secretariat.

2.2.2 INTERNET AND LITERATURE SEARCH

A more general document search was undertaken through the Internet (including STDF partner websites) to identify relevant information on SPS issues in developing countries, linkages to trade and market access, cross-cutting issues in SPS and third-party comment/assessment of STDF activities. This included documentation collected during the stakeholder consultation process (interviews with key institutions and in country missions). These were also reviewed in relation to the evaluation framework to identify evidence in respect of the indicators being investigated.

2.2.3 E-SURVEY OF STAKEHOLDERS

In order to obtain broader inputs from a wide range of stakeholders, a short e-survey was undertaken to a range of different stakeholders:

- Institutions implementing STDF PPGs and PGS, the scope of questions covered all aspects of STDF deliverables, as well as overall policy and governance – key contacts were provided by the STDF Secretariat;
- Competent authorities in developing countries, targeted to those who had, and had not used the knowledge platform and other STDF facilities to gauge the scope of coverage of outreach to target groups;
- Beneficiaries of project preparation grants - all beneficiaries of PPGs between 2014 and 2017 were targeted to learn of their experiences and also those that applied and failed (a modified shorter questionnaire was required for this sub-set);
- Beneficiaries of project grants – all beneficiaries of project grants between 2014 and 2017 were targeted as well as partners and beneficiaries of these projects.

A differentiated approach to the e-survey was adopted, asking specific questions to different groups. The questions and associated responses provided in ANNEX 7 were used as evidence in relation to the evaluation framework. The survey targeted 150-200 responses across the four groups of stakeholders and beneficiaries, and the STDF

¹⁴ The agreed workplan is provided in ANNEX 4.

¹⁵ The consolidation comments and Nathan's response are available on request.

Secretariat supplied an initial list of over 289 contacts. However, the survey had a very low response rate, with 30 answers in total, corresponding to 10% of targeted stakeholders, and therefore the results have limited validity.

2.2.4 KEY STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Key stakeholder interviews (KSI) were undertaken on a one-to-one basis with the STDF founding partners with a mission to Rome between 15-17 October 2018 (the FAO, IPPC, Codex), Paris on 19 October 2018 (the OIE) and Geneva between 29 October-1 November 2018 (the WTO, World Bank, WHO). In addition, during the Geneva mission, the WG was observed as well as key interviews with other partners, including donors, developing country experts and other stakeholders attending the WG were undertaken.

It should be emphasised that each partner institution itself proposed individuals to be interviewed for the evaluation. These nominated individuals, therefore, were clearly understood to be representing the views of their organisations and not expressing personal opinions. These face to face interviews were supplemented by a further series of telephone interviews with STDF Secretariat staff, the M&E expert, communications expert, previous partner liaisons and other stakeholders. Key stakeholder interviews were based on interview guidelines derived from the evaluation framework relevant to each group but largely focused on SPS issues in general, experience of STDF and opinions on how to improve the STDF in terms of its deliverables, operations and objectives. **More than 100 key interviews were undertaken** with comments and evidence consolidated by stakeholder group and included in the evaluation (a list is provided in (ANNEX 6).

2.2.5 CASE STUDIES

The purpose of in-country case studies was to explore in detail the activities of STDF in all its delivery areas with core beneficiaries and implementers. That is, not only PPGs and Projects (PGs), but also experience of the knowledge platform and national and international coordination facilitated by the STDF on SPS issues. As detailed in the inception report, Uganda and Guatemala were selected as case studies countries, with Kenya visited en-route to Uganda to discuss with key African implementers of PGs and PPGs. These case studies were of one week each and should be seen as a snapshot sample. A short overview of the findings of these case studies is provided in ANNEX 8 and ANNEX 9 respectively, and evidence has been included in the main evaluation.

2.2.6 DEEP DIVE ANALYSIS OF THEMATIC TOPIC

It was agreed during the Inception Phase that public-private partnerships would be the thematic topic for the deep dive as the STDF had been working on it since 2010, and that more recently (March 2018), the WG had requested the STDF Secretariat to update its work in this area. A combination of desk research and telephone interviews was undertaken. ANNEX 10 provides a summary of the findings and relevant evidence has been incorporated into the main evaluation.

2.2.7 REVIEW AND SYNTHESIS

Based on the findings from the research inputs as detailed above, the evidence was consolidated and assessed within the agreed evaluation framework, and a draft report was prepared and submitted to the STDF WG for review and comment.

2.3 FINALISATION PHASE

2.3.1 REVIEW AND FEEDBACK

In the preparation of this report, the feedback received on the Draft Evaluation Report from the STDF Secretariat, the STDF Evaluation Steering Group and the STDF Working Group was considered seriously and each comment was responded to with the redrafting of the text as necessary.

2.3.2 CONCLUDE FINDINGS AND DEVELOP RECOMMENDATIONS

The next, final phase of the evaluation will be presentation of findings and recommendations. It is important that the recommendations find “ownership” among the STDF Working Group and Policy Committee (as well as the Secretariat). Therefore the suggestions made in this report will be explored together with the key stakeholders through

the final consultation process. These recommendations will be presented to, and discussed with the STDF Policy Committee in their meeting with a view to informing the final evaluation report.

SECTION 3. EVALUATION FINDINGS

3.1 RELEVANCE

A1. ARE STDF ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS CONSISTENT WITH THE CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT NEEDS AND PRIORITIES OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IN THE AREAS OF FOOD SAFETY, ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH, AND TRADE?

A1.1 Overall Objectives

A1.1.1 How are the challenges of SPS measures in developing countries evolving and does STDF respond to these?

There is a plethora of problems in SPS that limit developing countries' access to markets, which limit trade and development. Many are product or region-specific and are based on disease or pest trends¹⁶ while others are capacity-related in terms of skills and/or organisation of national infrastructure for SPS.

The EU published a briefing note on Challenges of SPS in 2016¹⁷ which identified the most important issues for developing countries as: compliance (including skills of competent authorities and laboratory infrastructure); scientific capabilities; participation in international standards setting; improvements in national quality systems; regional coordination and; political framework. Most of these were confirmed by founding partners (including by extension, international SPS standards-setting bodies) who highlighted political priorities, border procedures, common control/inspection methodologies and procedures, regionalism, climate change and electronic certification (and other trade facilitation measures). The country case studies also identified issues such as out-dated legislation, lack of coordination among different competent authorities and private sector in SPS and trade, poor national controls/capacity (including at the border) and the lack of real political priority for SPS.

STDF Thematic Topics

1. Capacity development tools - evaluating SPS capacity and investment (tools developed by FAO/WHO, OIE and IPPC and STDF's own tool on prioritizing SPS investments for market access (P-IMA)
2. Electronic SPS certification
3. Facilitating safe trade
4. Good regulatory practice
5. Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)

Previous Topics

- Climate change
- Economic analysis
- Fruit fly
- Good practice
- Invasive Alien Species
- Laboratory infrastructure
- Private standards
- SPS indicators

The STDF thematic work covers all the key challenges in SPS in developing countries. Regarding coordination work of the STDF, the Facility clearly does raise these issues at international fora, but the opinion expressed by representatives of a number of founding partners was that the focus tended to be more on raising awareness of STDF projects and highlighting results, rather than necessarily on wider discussions on key SPS issues.¹⁸ PPGs and PGs work over a broader range of issues and although some grants are directly linked to these global issues (for example, pesticide data generation projects in Africa, Asia and Latin America that builds both science capacities and facilitates participation in international standards setting), many others do not and are focused on national or specific regional issues (e.g. honey value chain or flower export procedures).

The overwhelming majority of stakeholders interviewed (founding partners, donors and beneficiaries) agreed that STDF activities were addressing the main relevant constraints in unlocking trade through SPS capacity-building. This positive view is reflected in the findings of the stakeholder survey.¹⁹ The survey yielded findings on relevance to trade that were somewhat lower than anticipated based on the evaluation team's interviews and desk analysis and we judge that this is partly due to sample size. In addition, however, it was clear from some interviews that not every

¹⁶ WTO SPS Committee frequently discuss bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE, or mad cow disease), avian influenza (bird flu), foot and mouth disease, and various plant diseases and pests such as fruit flies.

¹⁷ https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/file/31270/download?token=_JpskYQ5

¹⁸ The Evaluation follows standard practice in distinguishing between presenting details or results of projects funded at international events, which is information sharing and communication; and dissemination of knowledge or strengthening coordination networks. Within the Evaluation's resource and time restrictions, the impact of STDF participation in events could not be measured and this could be subject of further investigation

¹⁹ 64.7% of PPG/PG implementers and 60% of beneficiaries of PPG/PGs stated that STDF capacity building unlocks trade

implementer and beneficiary appear to recognise an immediate connection between SPS capacity and trade (see section A1.1.2 below).

Conclusion

The STDF activities are targeting the current needs of developing countries in SPS and trade. This is evidenced by our finding that the majority of current SPS issues - both identified in desk research and raised by stakeholders as “key” SPS constraints - are covered by STDF Thematic Topics and many of these issues are also addressed through PPGs and PGs. The STDF is flexible and has responded, across all its outputs, to the evolving SPS issues that could constrain market access and trade of developing countries, making the STDF relevant to the current challenges.

A1.1.2 Are STDF activities in SPS capacity-building a “trade enabler”?

Knowledge tools for capacity building

P-IMA framework “can provide a valuable tool for developing countries to generate evidence on the expected impact of SPS investments on trade, agricultural productivity, poverty reduction and other public policy goals, which, in turn, will support fundraising efforts” (STDF Annual Report 2016).

PGs, thematic work and coordination in the area of electronic certification, together provided inputs to trade facilitation alignment work of the World Bank: “The STDF work on electronic certification, including the seminar in July 2016 and preparatory discussions and work for the ePhyto project offered the impetus for the World Bank and IPPC to deepen collaboration on SPS capacity building and trade facilitation. Dialogue and linkages, facilitated through this work, paved the way for the IPPC Secretariat to participate in a World Bank mission to Malawi in 2016 to consider how the findings and recommendations of the Phyto-sanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) tool could feed into the country needs assessment for implementation of the new WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement” (STDF Annual Report 2016).

Some of the STDF knowledge platform activities provide explicit capacity-building, know-how and tools in trade-related areas of SPS standards, controls and approvals. These provide the opportunities for developing trade through addressing SPS capacity issues.

In its coordination and communications work, the STDF has participated in a number of high-profile events addressing trade facilitation and SPS priorities, including IPPC’s International Year of Plant Health and Trade Facilitation. At the sixth Aid for Trade Global Review (2017), the STDF held a session for governments and businesses to raise awareness on electronic SPS certification (STDF Annual Report 2017).

The Facility’s PPGs and PGs are designed to be trade enablers as justified in their 2018 Results Booklet and, in most cases, PPG and PGs have an explicit link to trade built in their design. During country case studies, the reports on PGs highlighted that direct

issues in trade were being addressed, such as the case of Uganda where three PGs are targeting SPS controls resulting from high levels of intercepts in key markets for flowers, fruits and vegetables, and maize.

All three international standards-setting bodies also noted that that explicit trade links are not the only “trade enablers”. Addressing national SPS controls in itself enables trade, albeit sometimes in the long run. For example, building a disease-free region (e.g. free of foot and mouth disease) within a country will allow trade under the SPS Agreement.

By contrast, many donors stated that their involvement in the STDF was linked to this trade-enabling objective and that the short-term impact on trade was a driving motivation for contributions to the STDF. These contrasting views point to a need to clarify where the focus of STDF’s interventions should be – that is, on building national SPS infrastructure or on purely trade focused activities. This has caused some tensions in the WG and a position needs to be clearly established and understood.

STDF Results Booklet

All 25 projects presented include a section ‘safe trade gap’ where links are explained between the SPS issue(s) and implications to the trade of the country/countries in question, which projects then aim(ed) to address.

For example, the “STRONGER PHYTOSANITARY CONTROLS HELP UGANDA’S FLOWER EXPORTS TO GROW” (PG 335) project, implemented 2012-2015 (p.34) aimed to address: “Flower producers in Uganda faced heavy losses with the growing interception of cut flower exports to the EU. Costs rose with increased inspections, treatment and rejected consignments. In turn, investment in the sector was slowing, which was impacting on trade flows and economic growth. The problem – plant pests. The solution – getting the right tools and knowledge on phytosanitary measures in place to keep the flower supply chain safe. At the same time this would help to safeguard the livelihoods of the country’s 6,000 flower workers, 80% of them women, and their families.”

Conclusion

The activities of the STDF are clearly anchored in enabling trade, as described in their original mandate. We found that there is some debate among founding partners as to the extent to which building national SPS capacity per se can be seen as contributing to trade, which implies a need to ensure that the trade focus of the STDF is explicitly clarified. Activities across all deliverables - including knowledge platform topics, PPGs and PGs - have targeted trade. Although it is acknowledged that it is difficult to attribute changes in actual trade performance to the STDF activities, it is clear these activities have all been aimed at opening markets to allow trade to begin or to continue.

A1.2 STDF Structure

A1.2.1 Does the STDF react to address changes in importing country SPS regimes rather than reacting to emerging SPS crises?

The early philosophy of the STDF was to move away from addressing emerging SPS crises, as traditionally supported by donors, to a more strategic approach to address the challenges of complying with market requirements based on international standards. However, the SPS committee frequently notes complaints from developing countries that “developed” country import requirements go beyond these internationally agreed standards. The SPS committee also discusses emerging (or on-going SPS crises) with specific issues recurring in discussions, such as bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE, or mad cow disease), avian influenza (bird flu), foot and mouth disease, and various plant diseases and pests such as fruit flies.

There is no evidence that current donor SPS projects are focusing only on emerging crises, or that the STDF only works on longer-term market access. Fruit fly, for example, which can be an emerging crisis, has been both a PG and thematic topic in the knowledge platform but it could be argued that the work has focused where this issue has been a long-term concern. A list of EU projects in SPS also shows that the work of donors is not restricted to responding to emerging crises but more structural in nature.

In the Guatemala country case study, competent authorities remarked that donor projects and the STDF contributed to structural issues around SPS rather than emerging crises. In Uganda, it could be argued that responding to specific crises (the increase in interceptions of flowers caused by specific pests and diseases) has led to a longer-term structural impact. The competent authority in Uganda noted that as a result of this project, when new pests/diseases arose in the flower sector (which result in short term increases in interceptions), the national response (private and public sector) was able to deal with, mitigate and address the issue with the introduction of new controls.

Conclusion

The STDF is not designed to respond to emerging crises and its work is therefore mainly in addressing longer-term structural issues in the SPS regulatory and compliance systems of developing countries. Many more donors now support longer-term SPS capacity-building for trade and this offers the opportunity for the STDF to take an increasingly strategic approach to its interventions beyond reacting to immediate/short-term needs of beneficiaries.

A1.2.2 Does the STDF’s structure provide value-added?

The value-added of the STDF is based on the fact that the founding partners of the STDF are the international standard-setting bodies (including through parent/host organisations), SPS capacity-building bodies, a world trade rules-setting body and development agencies. One major donor stated that they would not be funding the STDF “without these linkages as it would be just another development funding mechanism.” It is clear that this unique partnership, which derives from these organisations and founding members²⁰, provides the STDF with insights and access to experts that no other organisation in SPS and trade has access to. Other donors, who do not have their own SPS programmes or expertise, stated that the presence of, and comments from, the three sisters gave them confidence in the quality of work undertaken by the STDF. Private sector observers to the STDF commented that its structure allowed for cooperation and coordination among the three SPS bodies which was very valuable, given that, in their view, the level of such cooperation is generally inadequate, a view that the three sisters also agreed with. Several donors stated that with the addition of observers advocating private standards, the STDF also provided additional value-added as a platform between international and private standards and interests.

The STDF Secretariat stresses that it consults partners systematically through the Working Group meetings on all thematic work and notes that partners have an opportunity to share insights and feedback and to raise new topics for thematic work. Nonetheless, in the interviews undertaken by the evaluation team with the individuals nominated by their organisations, STDF focal points and many officials within most of the partners reported their perception that they were not always consulted on thematic topics, and that their expertise or previous work on topics was not always sought or utilised. These interviewees felt that their advice, when sought, was not always reflected in briefs or

²⁰ This includes IPPC and Codex although these are not founding members in their own right. However, given they are not FAO or WHO organisations, but member bodies facilitated and governed by WHO/FAO, they are regarded as fundamental to the STDF and as one standards body stated, the FAO does not speak or represent their views.

positions produced by the STDF Secretariat. It was not possible in this evaluation to draw conclusions on the source or drivers of this apparent gap in communication – for example, whether the issues are *between* partners or *within* those partners themselves. It is incumbent on the evaluation team, however, to note the views of key interlocutors that the expertise they offer could be more fully utilised. In addition, the nominated representatives of IPPC and Codex who were interviewed reported that they feel marginalised and unclear of their relationship with the STDF, on the one hand being required to contribute as other founding members, but not being treated as founding members.

Most founding partners noted their perception that the STDF is now too influenced by donors in the focus and direction of STDF work, with the risk that the Facility engages in projects and activities that could be undertaken by other agencies, thus potentially not maximising the value-added inherent in the STDF's unique structure. In the view of these founding partners, the STDF should be encouraged to focus on the space not occupied by others, specifically longer-term, innovative and risky projects that might not yield immediate tangible results but would generate new knowledge and value-addition. Some donors do indeed acknowledge that they expect to see short-term, visible impacts and to some extent, this is reflected in STDF's activities. The evaluation team's review of PPGs and PGs, however, shows that this is not the case across the portfolio and the STDF Secretariat notes that the PPG/PGs are demand driven. To ensure that the unique STDF structure continues to deliver maximum value-added, one criterion for decision-making on projects and activities could be whether these could be undertaken by others working on SPS capacity-building or whether the STDF offers something additional that other entities cannot.

The implication here is that there is scope for the Facility to make fuller use of its partnerships and to ensure that all partners feel fully connected to the STDF. It is evident that where the relationships with key partners are working well, this has produced clear value-added. Beneficiaries in the Uganda country case study remarked that the STDF process was unique in that they could get inputs to their project from the IPPC, and that they appreciated the access to the top experts. Some project implementers commented that the inputs from founding partners meant that the PG and PPG design was of a higher quality than those of other donors and meant that the scope and impact of the project were greater (other projects may get to the same point after a costly learning process). The structure for value-added and unique interventions is in place within the STDF, but there is scope for it to be more fully exploited.

Conclusion

The STDF structure is unique in that it has access to expertise from key SPS standards and capacity development institutions, as well as trade and development. Where it utilises these linkages in its deliverables (and there are many examples across knowledge platform, coordination, PPG and PG activities), the STDF offers significant value-added. Managing the complex relationships that this involves is inevitably a challenge. As noted above, however, some key interlocutors also feel that there are cases where the STDF is delivering SPS capacity-building projects that could be delivered by other donors. To ensure that its unique value-added is maximised as more donors are moving into the SPS capacity-building sphere, the STDF needs to focus on maximising its linkages with founding partners and promoting innovation and best practice to ultimate beneficiaries.

A1.3 Deliverables

A1.3.1 All Outputs: Do the outputs match the needs of the beneficiary countries?

This is addressed within A1.1.1 on the response of the STDF to the SPS challenges of developing countries.

A1.3.2 Knowledge platform: To what extent beneficiaries and developing countries use the STDF as a knowledge platform to address their needs?

The STDF knowledge sharing platform aims to support SPS capacity-building in developing countries through identification and dissemination of good practice and results in publications, briefing notes, audio-visual material, joint consultations and other events at the global and/or regional level. These are based on work on thematic topics and lessons from PPGs and PGs.

Communications and outreach of the STDF knowledge platform has developed over recent years, more specifically through the re-launch of the website in 2014 and the implementation of the Communications Plan of 2016. In particular, the new STDF website launched in August 2014 was expected to be “instrumental” and as reported in 2014, *“Major results were achieved in further strengthening the STDF as a knowledge platform for information exchange, sharing experiences and identification and dissemination of good practice. From discussions with partners, donors and other organizations, it was clear that STDF tools, film and/or briefing notes are being used and disseminated, though*

the extent could not be measured" (STDF Annual Report 2014). However, analysis of the use of the website shows that in 2018, a higher number of users than expected are from Europe and North America with only 19% of website traffic originating from Africa, 14% from Latin America and 20% from Asia/Pacific. Both country case studies found little or no awareness of the knowledge platform, nor any use of it (even when it was discovered that beneficiaries were potentially very interested in the content). The knowledge platform tools such as P-IMA are used, but generally when being applied through or by PPGs or PGs. According to the survey, 80% of project beneficiaries and competent authorities in developing countries stated that they had not accessed lessons or best practice from STDF activities.

Whilst efforts were made to increase the dissemination of knowledge through implementation of the communications strategy, including innovations such as the use of short films and the production of Briefing Notes, most of the activities and communications are informational in nature, reporting STDF activities, results and some lesson learning. They do not deliver knowledge in the sense that the information offered can readily be translated by users into enhanced know-how on the part of the beneficiary (e.g. if a beneficiary wants to develop capacity to engage effectively with stakeholders in a practical way, the communications provide lesson learning and results from STDF activities but do not directly provide practical advice or guidance). The developing country experts noted the limited access of developing country beneficiaries to knowledge and they suggested that more should be done at a regional level. They also said that specific events with diplomatic missions in Geneva should be held (not just SPS side-events but also more targeted events).

Most donors stated that they did not use the knowledge platform at all. Some stated they circulated STDF materials to their respective country offices, but that its use was very dependent on the recipients' interests. Although the Secretariat has sought to mobilise this effort, there is no evidence that headquarters or country offices of any partners actively and systematically promote or encourage the use of materials produced by the STDF.

Conclusion

The knowledge platform provides a broad range of information and materials on best practice (including manuals and training resources) on a range of SPS and trade-related topics based on new research, inputs from partners and learning from PG and PPGs. However, there is no evidence to suggest that this bank of valuable information is yet being actively used by partners or donors, or that it is reaching beneficiaries in developing countries, except through projects. This is partly because beneficiaries are unaware that these materials are available, but also because they are not readily accessible. Partners and donors have a crucial role to play through their networks in enhancing access to, and facilitating the use of, STDF materials.

A1.3.3 PPGs and Project Grants: To what extent are PPGs and project grant applications "owned" by national stakeholders?

The meta-evaluation concluded (p.28) that the STDF should in the future, be more rigorously grounded *"locally, including understanding local contexts and needs, and securing local ownership and participation at all stages of the project"*. Several partners commented that many of the PGs and PPGs originated from founding and other implementing partners but in these cases, the STDF Secretariat checks for adequate support in country. However, the meta-evaluation commented that the efforts to ensure ownership were not sufficient: *"A simple letter of support may not be enough to ensure ownership in a technical assistance project."* Some donors also noted their view that the Secretariat sometimes pushed and advocated and became very invested in the PPGs and PGs they guided.

However, research in the country case studies showed that all the PPGs and PGs were developed and implemented from issues and ideas that originated in the countries. In addition, 100% of beneficiaries in the survey stated they were involved in some way with the development of the grant concept and application (60% to a great or very great extent). Similarly, over 80% of implementers stated that beneficiaries were involved in the concept development and 70% to a great or very great extent.

Conclusion

Ideas for PPGs and PGs originate from a range of sources, but all of those examined by the evaluation were derived from issues raised at country level. Who specifically generates concepts is less important than ensuring that PPGs and PGs have the support of beneficiary governments, and the available evidence shows this to be the case for most, if not all, PPGs and PGs.

Overall assessment of A1

The STDF is working in areas that address the capacity development needs and priorities of developing countries in the areas of food safety, animal and plant health, and trade. More importantly, it is in some cases using its unique structure and linkages to international SPS standards bodies and SPS, trade and development capacity-building organisations to develop and promote best practice in SPS controls to facilitate trade. However, given that more donors and projects are now working in this area, the STDF needs to focus on innovative approaches, leveraging its linkages and structure more, to maintain relevance and value-added, rather than delivering activities that other donors could equally provide.

The STDF topics and development of best practice, as well as project work on the ground, are very targeted at maintaining or opening market access for developing countries through improved SPS measures and controls and the STDF is developing manuals, training, and procedures that aim to improve systems for adapting to new issues in regional and international trade. However, the use of STDF materials by beneficiaries is limited, despite recent efforts to improve communications.

A2. HOW RELEVANT IS THE STDF FOR THE SPS POLICIES AND STRATEGIES OF THE STDF FOUNDING PARTNERS AND DONORS, INCLUDING IN THE CONTEXT OF THE BROADER AID FOR TRADE INITIATIVE?

A2.1 Overall Objectives

A2.1.1 How do STDF activities and projects complement or align with those policies and strategies of founding partners and donors?

The SPS standards and capacity-building partners of the STDF are unclear as to how the STDF itself aligns with their own agendas and what the benefits to them are from engaging in the Facility. One partner felt that the Facility was “a burden” and suggested that their staff did not want to be involved as they considered it a distraction from their core work. The founding partners all actively work with the STDF and their staff contributes time and effort, but it is not explicit how the STDF contributes to the institutional strategies and objectives of the founding partners, nor the individual staff plans of those participating. It is obvious from a review of the STDF’s activities that there are major synergies and potential value-added between the STDF and these partners. However, none of those interviewed could clearly define or elaborate on this. There is therefore a risk of future disengagement (either formally and/or materially) from the STDF.

The other founding partners have a very different sense of the relationship with the STDF, with the links to their own agendas better understood i.e. in that SPS capacity-building is recognised as a “trade enabler” in line with their trade related objectives.

In general, the donors reported that the STDF is aligned with their development agendas. Many said they used the STDF to deliver SPS-related capacity-building as they did not have bi-

lateral programmes of their own and looked for high profile results to report within their overall aid for trade and overseas development portfolios. Other donors are SPS-related agencies themselves, and stated they used the STDF to channel limited funds to achieve the promotion of good practice in developing countries with often a trade interest (enabling agricultural imports from developing country partners). There are also some larger donors that do have their own SPS capacity programmes but very much look to the STDF for innovation and learning - although there is little evidence that they actually use the learning themselves, rather wanting to be associated with and part of innovative approaches.

The mission: To secure cooperation among nations in protecting global plant resources from the spread and introduction of pests of plants, in order to preserve food security, biodiversity and to facilitate trade (IPPC Strategic Plan 2012-19);

To implement this vision, the three strategic objectives of the OIE include: [...] Establish trust between stakeholders and trading partners in cross-border trade of animals and animal-based products and foods” (OIE Strategic Plan 2016-20);

Strategic Vision Statement: To be the preeminent international food standards-setting body to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade (Codex Strategic Plan 2014-9);

Strategic Objective 4: In contributing to the development of agricultural and food systems [...] focus will be on enhancing countries’ capacities to participate in the formulation of international standards and trade agreements, to design and implement supportive policies and regulations, and in the development of value chain. (FAO DG Medium term Plan 2018-21).

Conclusion

The STDF's objectives are clearly aligned with those of its partners but there is a clear disjoint between perceptions and contributions among founding partners (and by extension, international standards-setting bodies). While it is clear that donors see the STDF as a good, effective mechanism to deliver their SPS capacity-building mandates, and the trade and development founding partners see the STDF as an important tool to address developing countries' market access concerns, the main SPS standards and capacity-building partners are not clear how it fits with their agendas, and their perception is that the benefits to them of investing in STDF are uncertain. Whether or not this is an objectively accurate assessment is a moot point. If this perception results in less than full engagement by key partners, the unique structure of the STDF will be at risk.

A2.2 STDF Structure**A2.2.1 How open is the STDF to inputs from beneficiaries/beneficiary countries?**

The STDF working group is responsible for preparation and approval of STDF work plans, approving PPGs and PGs and oversight of the STDF Secretariat. It comprises representatives of STDF's founding partners (the FAO, OIE, WB, WHO, WTO), Secretariats of the Codex and IPPC, donors, six developing country experts and observer organisations. The role of the developing country experts is to provide the developing country perspective, which is complemented by observers including from CABI Africa and COLEACP. Although the STDF Secretariat regularly participates in meetings of the SPS Committee, as well as Codex/IPPC/OIE, where the Secretariat listens to SPS and trade issues raised by developing country members, there is no direct representation of developing country beneficiaries in the main discussion platform, STDF Working Group.

Developing country experts noted that the Secretariat consulted with them extensively before each WG meeting so that they had a better perspective from the beneficiary side. Several donors commented that they would appreciate a better understanding of the views from beneficiaries. Some noted that although interventions from developing country experts were sometimes useful in the WG to provide context, this was not always the case. It was also noted by donors that it is also to some extent ad-hoc, in that developing country experts generally bring a national rather than regional or collective perspective, thereby limiting the influence and effectiveness of the developing country expert system.

Conclusion

The STDF is open to inputs from beneficiary countries but its structure and composition mean that it actually has very little direct interaction or discussion with developing countries in the shaping of its agenda or work plan. The STDF has good communications for individual grants but relies on its six developing country experts to provide a developing country perspective and these experts represent personal views rather than any official or widespread regional views. In reality, therefore, developing country beneficiaries have very little input in shaping the direction and focus of the STDF.

A2.3 Deliverables**A2.3.1 Coordination/dialogue: Do members of the STDF use the platform as an international dialogue and coordination mechanism?**

According to the SPS standards and capacity-building founding members, the STDF provides an important forum for them to meet and discuss relevant issues during WG meetings. These organisations currently do not have a formal mechanism of coordination and do not meet in any formal arena. Therefore, the STDF facilitates this meeting and exchange of ideas, working programmes and interests. However, it was commented that in the early days of the STDF, the WG was smaller and these organisations enjoyed more intimate and technically-oriented networking opportunities, and a better ability to exchange views on specific topics over time. However, since the WG has substantially expanded, with non-SPS expert participants involved, the networking is considered to be of less value for interaction among SPS bodies, but valuable for understanding donors' activities in SPS in countries where they work.

The donors also reported that the WG was a good dialogue platform to learn about others' activities and avoid duplication of efforts and was easier platform to discuss issues, especially compared to other arenas such as WTO SPS Committee. It was also reported that donors and SPS standards-setting bodies referred to the STDF PG and

PPG listings on the website to review and better understand the scope of SPS activities in either thematic areas or specific countries.²¹

The benefit of coordination was witnessed during the Working Group meeting observed by the evaluation team, where a tabled PG generated discussion from bilateral and multilateral donors and SPS standards-setting bodies regarding plans, activities and previous experiences surrounding government control of cadmium in cocoa. This facilitated the provision of information by the EU on plans to support academic research on the same subject (and the sharing of a concept note), and by Codex on a soon to be proposed standard for MRL of cadmium in chocolate. The US promised to share its previous work on this area, and the Netherlands suggested that it could support and supplement this work in future in Colombia. It is hard to imagine another forum where this exchange of vital information could have taken place.

Conclusion

Partners and donors do use the STDF to learn about different programs and projects in SPS-related coordination and the WG is a good networking and coordination forum (less formal and easier than the WTO SPS committee). However, this area of coordination can be further developed in terms of technical discussions across animal health, plant health, food safety and trade.

A2.3.2 Knowledge platform: Does the STDF knowledge platform complement the information produced and gathered by other partner institutions? What is the value-added of the STDF knowledge platform?

It is generally agreed that the STDF is working in key and often, innovative areas, and gains much knowledge, experience and lessons from its PGs and PPGs. However, all the SPS capacity-building partners (including by extension, the international SPS standards-setting bodies) noted their perception that work already undertaken in these areas by the founding partners is not adequately used by the STDF and is sometimes duplicated. On the other hand, it should be noted that the concept notes prepared by the STDF Secretariat (at the request of the WG) on thematic topics are attempts to ensure that there are linkages to existing work, especially work from partners in these topics. It was beyond the scope of the evaluation to undertake a broad and deep analysis of the content of these concept notes, but a light touch review of a selection of concept notes indicated that the work of founding partners was indeed included and assessed in those cases.

Some founding partners flagged up concerns about the creation of new tools, given that each of the three sisters already has a diagnostic tool, and highlighted a risk that promoting P-IMA risked undermining the STDF's founding partners' tools. On the other hand, one observer of the WG meeting, and a beneficiary interviewed during the country case study noted that the application of the P-IMA tool was better than individual SPS tools. Specifically, it seeks to examine issues and prioritise them across the disciplines, not just list deficiencies in specific areas; and it is considered to work well. Whilst the tools developed by the STDF appear to be complementary rather than duplicatory, there is scope for the STDF to develop mechanisms²² to align existing tools and integrate them (as suggested by other founding partners and donors), promote the use of founding partners' diagnostic tools (to avoid creating or reinforcing a perception that the STDF is promoting its own tools over those of its partners), and to prepare new tools that could be developed and branded in partnership with the three sisters.

STDF Concept Notes Reference Relevant Materials of Founding Partners

GRP: The concept note on Good Regulatory practice explores the links to previous STDF work (p.6-7), between GRP and the SPS Agreement (p. 7), to discussions on GRP in the SPS and TBT Committees (p.8), to the work of STDF partners (p.9-10), and to work by other international organizations, as well as relevant regional / country level initiatives (p.10-12).

Based on a google search on founding partners and their work on good regulatory practice, most of the top results from the founding partners' websites match with the work that is mentioned in the concept note.

PPP: The concept note on PPP practice explores the links to previous STDF work (p.1-2), and links to relevant previous publications to inform STDF's work (p. 3-5).

Based on a google search on founding partners and their work on good PPP ('founding partner' 'public private partnerships' 'SPS'), most of the top results are from the founding partners' websites.

²¹ It was suggested by several partners and donors that the STDF should build a databank of global SPS projects (collecting data from those submitting project lists to the SPS committee and/or review of A4T reporting based on DAC codes). Whilst this would be a useful source, the collection and maintenance of such a database is likely to be a challenge and costly so the cost of this in relation to benefit is unclear. In fact, in 2004 a PG (STDF/PG/005) tried to do this but failed primarily due to a lack of information provided by partners and donors.

²² For example, the STDF is leading development of a SPS-TF diagnostic tool based on existing SPS diagnostic tools of FAO/WHO, OIE and IPPC and discussions led by the World Bank within the WTO arena involving STDF Secretariat and founding members was undertaken in October 2018.

Another criticism of the knowledge platform voiced by a founding member was that thematic areas were not developed “deeply enough”, and that more work was needed to develop and expand work in specific areas. Regulatory practice work, for example, is being developed but has not generated specific guidelines and advice that developing country beneficiaries could actually use and apply. The founding members’ advice was that the STDF should focus and “go deep.” From the review of Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) (See ANNEX 10), it appears that the work has started but not yet been followed through to determine an STDF position or recommendation that can be promulgated or promoted for the benefit of developing countries. Given resource constraints and size of the STDF, it appears that it is trying to do too much and could benefit from a greater focus. This would enable it to concentrate more effort, in-depth follow-up and analysis in fewer areas.

Conclusion

The STDF does use information and knowledge from its partnerships but more could be done to integrate the work of others and explicitly link to it. The value-added potential of the STDF is not only in bringing existing knowledge on trade and SPS together in one place, and in building on and using its partners’ knowledge, but also in developing common themes across both thematic areas and multi-disciplines of animal health, plant health and food safety. More in-depth work could be achieved if more resources were made available, but might also require focusing on fewer themes.

A2.3.3 PPG: Do the PPGs play a pivotal role in designing donor interventions?

Founding partners expressed the view that the PPG facility was an important and unique mechanism that allowed project design and needs assessment in SPS and trade to be guided and contributed with inputs from genuine world class experts, making projects of high quality. Donors also reiterated the view that PPGs led to high-quality project design, and although some stated that they sent PPG results to country desks/offices, few examples of donors taking and implementing a follow-up project based on PPG design could be produced. Moreover, examination of the STDF annual reports did not highlight any instance where a PPG had been taken on by other donors.

However, the lack of evidence does not necessarily imply that PPGs do not lead to further work. It is probable that donors (or consultants designing donor projects) build on PPG findings in designing projects and programmes, but attribution is very difficult to ascertain. Moreover, beneficiaries often submit project concepts and funding requests to multiple donors in different formats without reference to the STDF, which makes the origin of project ideas extremely hard to track. It was reported during the country case study in Uganda, for example, that the fruit and vegetable PPG was sent by the Ministry of Agriculture to multiple donors including World Bank and Embassy of the Netherlands (and this resulted in the PG collaboration; see below). The conclusion that the impact of PPGs may be masked is reflected in the survey of STDF-implementing organisations, which suggests 64% of PPGs have led to further activities related directly to PPG findings, including other donor projects.

It should be noted that the STDF Secretariat and other partners commented that often among beneficiaries, there was an expectation that a PPG would be financed by the STDF as a PG. More could be done by STDF partners to promote PPGs to donors as design tools or link PPGs to donor programmes and plans. In relation to the latter point, one of the new STDF donors expressed a desire to have explicit links and feed-in mechanisms.

Conclusion

The PPGs provide a unique opportunity to develop high-quality project designs, defining the needs with the beneficiary country and comments and inputs from global SPS and standards-setting bodies and their experts. However, there is little verifiable evidence to suggest that donors are using these PPGs to inform or design their own SPS interventions, and more specifically, there is often an expectation among beneficiaries that a successful PPG will lead to an STDF PG.

A2.3.4 Projects: Do projects complement or leverage partner donor funds; would projects still have happened without the grants?

There have been a few cases where PGs have been used as leverage for other donor funds. In the most recent case in Uganda, the Embassy of the Netherlands is funding a part of a new STDF project but stated that it would have funded their component anyway. For donors, the major motivation for working with the STDF is cooperation, learning and avoiding duplication rather than financial leverage.

Conclusion

There is no evidence to suggest that project grants are being used by donor partners to fund SPS projects. Although matching funds are required for STDF PGs, these are usually in-kind contributions and means that there is no verifiable evidence that the STDF is playing a pivotal role in leveraging additional SPS funding.

Overall assessment of A2

The STDF remains directly relevant to the trade and SPS capacity-building agendas of both the founding partners and donors; the objectives of the STDF and its activities clearly align with their respective institutional strategies. However, there is a major disconnect between the STDF and SPS standards and capacity-building institutions in the recognition of exactly how the STDF fits into their work plan. Donor strategies and objectives are also met through the STDF, supporting on-going A4T capacity-building efforts (in some cases, representing the donors' only activities in this area). However, the use of PPGs as high-quality needs assessment and project design mechanism has not been taken up, and STDF PGs do not leverage other monies in any significant way. However, if the STDF's purpose is more about developing best practice and innovation, this may not be a significant issue.

3.2 EFFECTIVENESS

B1. HOW HAVE THE OUTPUTS AND OUTCOME IN THE STDF MEDIUM TERM STRATEGY BEEN ACHIEVED?

B1.1 STDF Structure

B1.1.1 How effective is the STDF in achieving the outputs and outcome? To what extent have these contributed to the programme goal?

The structure of the STDF is based on bringing together and enabling interaction between the founding partners (including by extension, the SPS standards-setting bodies), donors and other stakeholders; that is all the major global players in SPS standards-setting, capacity-building and trade. The outputs of the STDF are widely considered by stakeholders to have addressed important constraints for developing countries, in terms of market access through building the capacity of developing countries in SPS inspection, certification and control based on international standards. This is further evidenced through the meta-evaluation of projects, the results booklet of the STDF, interviews with all stakeholders, and the survey of WG members who expressed satisfaction with the STDF (Working Group survey 2017 and 2015 based on Survey Monkey documents).

Interviewees representing founding partners, donors and observers to the WG meetings all agreed that the STDF Secretariat worked effectively to deliver outputs, particularly the PPGs and PGs. WG members and stakeholders in case study

countries further recognised that the Secretariat supported the applicants with the development of PPGs and PGs to ensure they are of high quality, and was then heavily engaged in management and guidance during implementation.

In terms of coordination, knowledge platform, PPGs and PGs, having the founding members, donors and observers working and commenting on thematic topics and proposals produces high-quality input to all STDF deliverables. Donors, implementers and beneficiaries during both country case studies reported that inputs and access to these experts from founding partners was an effective method to deliver PPG/PGs.

OUTPUTS DELIVERED BASED ON STDF ANNUAL REPORTS

2014 Outputs: The STDF met its targets and approved six PPGs applications and four PGs-- "5 projects were contracted and started implementation" [...] and "9 PPGs were being implemented." However, some of the planned deliverables were not carried out: Thematic work on safe trade in Southern Africa was delayed: "Due to the unexpected closure of TMSA in 2014" and work "to finalize the draft guide to prioritize SPS investments options for market access, based on multi criteria decision analysis" (p.2) was delayed due to unforeseen circumstances; a briefing note on lessons learned (p.4) was not feasible and; "Due to migration to the new STDF website, traffic statistics were not available. (STDF Annual Report 2014)

2015 Outputs: All the planned activities for outputs seem to have been delivered as listed in the Annex 1 Logframe (p.33-34): "STDF members continue to be very satisfied with the performance of the STDF Secretariat, as illustrated by the findings of the survey of STDF members carried out in December 2015 (Figure 8). Respondents were particularly satisfied with the responsiveness and efficiency of the STDF Secretariat in servicing the Working Group, and its role in supporting the review of funding applications." (STDF Annual Report 2015)

The STDF is in a unique position to be an effective convening platform for coordination, with founding partners forming an integral part of the STDF structure itself. For example, in the review of the STDF's thematic work on Public-Private Partnerships (PPP), it was observed that in the beginning of the PPP work, the STDF had both GFSI and COLEACP as panellists at STDF/LNV/World Bank workshop on Public Private Partnerships (2010), which showed private sector interest and commitment, but there is scope to do more, as illustrated by examples of UNIDO working closely with Metro and Coca Cola (see ANNEX 10).

However, a number of partners have raised concerns over STDF's resources, commenting that there is insufficient staff at the STDF Secretariat to continue at the current level of engagement. Therefore, as the STDF Annual Report 2017 notes, this risks undermining continued effectiveness:

Risk matrix (p.66-67) "STDF Secretariat not fully staffed and operational": "Action to mitigate risk: Following internal changes in the STDF team, the WTO hired two temporary staff. In 2017, the STDF benefitted from the contribution of three interns for a total of 11 months. The Secretariat continued to explore effective ways of operating, including to rely on the support of external experts to support ongoing M&E work, and to expand and strengthen the STDF's communications work. The STDF Secretariat was able to secure the services of a WTO Young Professional for a one year period, starting in January 2018."

Some donors also expressed the view that the STDF should have larger funds for PPGs and PGs and that they would be willing to increase their contributions accordingly. There certainly appears to be "effective" demand for increased STDF funding as examination of recent WG meeting minutes show some approved PGs have not been funded due to lack of resources. However, given the resource-heavy development and monitoring of implementation of PPGs and PGs, this would add further constraints to human resources.

Conclusion

The STDF is an effective structure to deliver key learning, coordination, PPGs and PGs based on significant inputs from STDF Secretariat and partners' staff across all deliverables. As a result, there is a high degree of achievement in outputs, with reported good results and quality across deliverables but the provision of adequate resources to the Secretariat will be required to continue at this level.

B1.2 Deliverables

B1.2.1 Coordination/dialogue: Is the Working Group an effective coordination mechanism?

Participation in the Working Group by the major STDF partners is consistently high, with strong attendance by founding partners, donors and developing country experts. The average number of participants in Working Group meetings between 2014 and 2018 was 46, and there were four information presentations per meeting. Most partners stated that the WG was an effective method of coordination as it allowed for a more informal approach (for example, compared with the WTO SPS Committee), which fostered information exchange that they would otherwise not have had. SPS Standards-setting bodies also remarked that it was a good mechanism for them to exchange ideas and provide interesting insights into others' priorities and activities that they could not get anywhere else (the STDF is filling a coordination gap among SPS standards and capacity-building bodies). However, SPS standards-setting bodies commented that discussions were not technical enough in terms of SPS depth, and that insufficient time was allowed within the WG for developing and exchanging ideas rather than for approvals of PPGs and PGs, issues which they linked to the size of the Working Group and the presence of many members who are not SPS experts. Some donors on the other hand thought that there was *too much* technical SPS discussion and that more concentration on work plan reporting was needed.

Some donors also questioned the effectiveness of time spent on PGs and PPGs. Based on observations of discussions and exchange of information on PGs and PPGs during this time (for example on control of cadmium in

OUTPUTS DELIVERED BASED ON STDF ANNUAL REPORTS

2016 Outputs: All the planned activities for outputs seem to have been delivered as listed in the Annex 1 Logframe (p.33-34) and as listed on p.4 including 22 SPS capacity-building projects from Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean at various stages of implementation, and STDF Secretariat participated in over 55 events worldwide, reaching more than 3,800 public and private sector stakeholders with an interest in SPS issues, promoting dialogue and knowledge transfer. (STDF Annual Report 2016)

2017 Outputs: (p.72-73) All planned activities for each Output and Outcome seem to have been delivered and the majority of the targets seem to have been met or exceeded. For example, Outputs three & four – PPGs and PGs: p. 59 "The Working Group also took the lead on the review and approval of new requests for STDF funding. A total of nine new project grants and seven PPGs were approved at both meetings, compared to one project and 11 PPGs approved in 2016; STDF conducted a WG stakeholder survey in December 2017, and one of the areas for improvement was p.58 "streamline the process of reviewing grant applications." (STDF Annual Report 2017)

cocoa – see A.2.3.1 above), this process is actually what leads to better coordination and would appear to be necessary investment of time.

However, when establishing the effectiveness of the wider coordination outside the WG itself, coordination seems to be less effective, as there is little evidence that participants liaise or coordinate *within* their own institutions. Donor and founding partner representatives that participate in the WG all described how they reported on each meeting and submitted these reports to their hierarchy. Some even took the initiative and distributed the reports to a wider internal audience. However, most felt that this was not effective in disseminating information and exchange among their own colleagues, as they were too busy to read “yet another” report of an international meeting. Equally, there seemed to be little coordination within founding partners on inputs to thematic topics and information seminars, and partners were simply recipients of this information rather than contributors or disseminators of it. One founding partner commented several times that the onus is on the partners themselves to develop more effective participation, and called upon them to take preparation more seriously. The exception is in reviewing applications for PPGs and PGs, where a more focused comment process was apparent among some partners as they reported comments and contributions from throughout their respective governments.

Inputs from developing countries are through the developing country experts, who provide a beneficiary perspective. However, these experts represent themselves rather than any specific institution, and only some have formal links with their own country SPS infrastructure. Several donors commented that they appreciated inputs from developing country experts but that sometimes the relevance and quality was mixed. Others commented that the inputs and coordination with developing countries needs to be strengthened.

Conclusion

The Working Group is effective as a coordination mechanism, as many founding members do not meet to discuss SPS capacity-building issues for developing countries in any other fora. However, the STDF standards-setting bodies have concerns that the Working Group does not allocate sufficient space for more technical SPS work. Moreover, there appears to be a lack of preparation reflecting poor internal coordination by the participating organisations, which means that exchanges in the Working Group meetings are often limited to the individual, rather than institutional level.

B1.2.2 Knowledge platform: Does the target audience of the STDF knowledge platform have access to STDF products (website, external events, thematic topics and publications)?

The STDF states in successive Annual Reports that the Working Group and participation in external events provides widespread access to information and the knowledge platform on SPS capacity-building for developing country beneficiaries and partner organisations, with the STDF members ‘increasingly disseminating knowledge and best practice’ (STDF Annual Report 2017). This statement assumes that WG members (as individuals) disseminate the information broadly, and many of the donors have reported that the knowledge platform is one of the most valuable assets of the STDF, and is a main motivation for contributing to the trust fund. However, as detailed in A1.3.2, donors and founding partners do not appear to follow through on this and actively disseminate materials.

The STDF (and the STDF Secretariat) participate in a broad range of events that reach out to a large audience. For example, in 2015, the STDF participated in more than 55 key events reaching over 3,800 stakeholders, some organised by STDF partners for key SPS stakeholders, while some were national and regional workshops and training seminars to developing countries’ benefit (STDF Annual Report 2015).

The STDF re-launched its website in August 2014 to help with outreach of the knowledge platform and has 713 documents. In 2017, there were over 22,300 login sessions to the STDF website and over 11,618 downloads. Individual visitors have been fairly constant since its re-launch, with 21,209 logins in 2015.

However, although the overall level of traffic is high, it is not focused on developing country beneficiaries, with only 53% of visitors in 2018 originating in developing countries. Moreover, there are fewer numbers of regular visitors, with only 43% returning visitors in 2015, 41% in 2016 and 38% in 2017. It is therefore unclear how effective the website is as a knowledge platform.

After the homepage (in English), the e-certification page was the most visited, with 2,165 views. Other top ten pages include: database of approved STDF projects; homepage (in Spanish); database of approved PPGs; homepage (in French), Facilitating safe trade; STDF at a glance brochure, and P-IMA. The Guidance Note for Applicants (in English) was the most downloaded document, followed by the STDF Fact Sheet (in English).”

Moreover, the information in the knowledge platform is not presented in a cohesive and accessible way. For example, the deep dive on PPP (ANNEX 10) found that although there were 33 mentions and lessons on public private partnerships in the final project reports, it was not possible to automatically access these references from the interface, nor was there any consolidated analysis of conclusions that partners and beneficiaries could take from these lessons. To gather all available information and experience on PPP, the user would have to go through each section of the website and every project document, and although mining the website in such way offers a good level of experience and knowledge, users (founding partners, donors and beneficiaries) are not likely to do this.

Meta-Evaluation Recommendations

“[...] STDF as a partnership do more to support the dissemination, learning and follow-up of individual STDF projects in beneficiary countries and regions within the broader STDF Communications Plan and [...] STDF increase the sharing of good practice on SPS capacity-building”

In addition, the vast bulk of information provided on the website reports on outputs and successes, rather than actual knowledge that partners and beneficiaries could use in an easily accessible and usable way. For example, the Results Booklet gathers 25 stories of good practice models from STDF projects in food safety, animal and plant health and cross-cutting SPS areas, but lacks practical information on how to replicate those projects or use the best practise.

There is a remarkable volume of content, particularly on projects, on the STDF website, where it is possible to access project background information, results, recommendations and project-specific documents. They also link to other relevant web pages or documents, such as results stories, if applicable. For example, via the web page for PG 436, [Strengthening capacity in Latin America to meet pesticide export requirements](#), it is also possible to access a news release on the project made by the partner organisation. However, some founding partners' view is that the website is mainly informational and promotional, rather than providing true project results assessments and lesson learning. During the Guatemala country case study (ANNEX 9), some implementers commented that results presented on the STDF website usually highlighted only the positive aspects of projects, and lessons learned were not very clear. Given that the STDF tries to work in the innovation space, it should be allowed to accept and learn from failures and less productive outcomes. The “Resources” section on the website also does not actually provide resources but rather a summary of different outreach outputs and communication materials, such as results stories on projects, [briefings](#), [events](#), [newsletter](#), [publications](#), [results stories](#), [YouTube channel](#) and [working group documents](#).

Similarly, the thematic topics section of the website provides information on six of the STDF activities around the thematic topics (projects, events, research, workshops) and publications. However, it is static information rather than firm guidance or practical support for partners and implementers.

From the country case studies, none of the PG and PPG beneficiaries, implementing agencies or competent authorities interviewed said they had accessed the knowledge platform. From the survey of beneficiaries, only 20% responded that the STDF Secretariat had reached out to them regarding best practice from the knowledge platform. Although based on limited survey results, combined with country and key stakeholder interviews, this suggests that there is insufficient access from target audiences to the knowledge platform, and more work could be undertaken to make the most of this tool, as also concluded in the meta-evaluation.

Conclusion

The knowledge platform aims to provide new information and know-how to partners for further dissemination and use, and to developing country beneficiaries to improve SPS capacities to enable trade. This is meant to be achieved through outreach by partners in the WG, and through events and website access. However, widespread use and dissemination of STDF's knowledge is limited among both partners (restricted mostly to WG participants) and beneficiaries in developing countries (with some of those participating in events). While STDF's communications have improved, it raises the awareness and highlights the availability of materials but does not directly promote the use of, or access to the know-how generated by the STDF.

B1.2.3: PPGs: What is the conversion rate between PPGs implemented and follow-up projects? What is the leverage rate?

See A2.3.3 in section 3.1.

Conclusion

There is little verifiable evidence to show that PPGs result in follow-up projects from other donors; that is, donors are not using the PPGs in any significant ways as needs assessment or project design mechanisms for their interventions.

B1.2.4: Projects: Do the STDF projects contribute to enhanced SPS capacity in beneficiary countries?

PGs are used to build capacity of developing countries to address SPS issues and unlock or enable trade. In the majority of cases, the overall objectives of these projects (as evidenced from a review of the 25 projects in the STDF Results booklet) were to enhance SPS capacity linked to trade with four out of 11 projects implemented in years 2014-2017, reporting concrete results in terms of gaining or maintaining market access.

Country case study reports showed high levels of impact and sustainability across the projects implemented in Uganda and Guatemala, and greatly improved SPS capacities in specific sectors. In the opinion of some founding partners, however, the STDF should be focused more on projects that have learning in a regional or global context, rather than those that have a focus on a sector/market or specific beneficiary. Based on the assessment of the results of the PGs, STDF activities have generated very positive results, contributing successfully to SPS capacity-building in beneficiary countries.

Conclusion

Projects have been certainly shown to improve SPS capacity-building in beneficiary countries, so as a tool they appear to be effective; but the scale of the projects means that the overall impact, although positive, will be relatively small.

Overall assessment of B1

The STDF has contributed to “increased capacity of developing countries to implement international SPS standards, guidelines and recommendations and hence ability to gain and maintain market access” but there is no verifiable evidence that this goes beyond countries and markets where its projects are focused. Furthermore, although the STDF undertakes coordination work and produces useful materials, the Facility is currently not very effective in communicating or disseminating these materials to a wider, global set of beneficiaries which would facilitate a much greater impact.

B2. HOW EFFECTIVE IS THE STDF IN MEASURING PROGRESS TOWARDS ACHIEVING OUTPUTS, AND CONTRIBUTION TO THE DESIRED OUTCOME, AND IN COMMUNICATING RESULTS?**B2.1 STDF Structure****B2.1.1 Does the STDF’s structure enable effective results measurement and communications of results?**

Most Working Group members agree that the STDF has significantly improved its M&E activities and communications over recent years, but that this is only a step in the right direction and much more needs to be done. Donors particularly want better assessment and communications of results, rather than reporting on outputs. Much of the motivation from donors is that they themselves need to report on results levels and they desire to have results from the STDF in order to report and justify engagement with the STDF, so in terms of the STDF funding, this is a necessary step to keep donors engaged. However, some founding partners have cautioned against over-simplifying results and outcome level indicators, as they are difficult to measure and quantify in SPS capacity-building, and attribution is even more difficult: “The STDF is meant to be innovative and so results are not simply measuring increase in employment.”

Following the previous evaluation, the STDF engaged a part-time external expert to guide the STDF monitoring and evaluation process with ex-post evaluations of PGs. However, little or no evaluations of knowledge platform or coordination activities have been undertaken.

Again, most stakeholders believe that there have been significant improvements in the way that the STDF reports results, through both annual reporting and results booklet, but with the caveat noted above that there is scope to continue to improve. In this regard, the meta-evaluation noted that *“STDF projects produce robust results at different results levels”, but asked “are these results effectively integrated into the current results reporting of the STDF and in line with the expectations of STDF’s partners, donors and beneficiary countries?”*

The results booklet also shows that the STDF projects have been successful, but again more at the output level, for example listing number of inspectors trained in Latin America or creation of a manual in Uganda. The STDF should be reporting on the results where possible. For example, during the country case study in Uganda, it was reported that as a result of developing the manual and of training inspectors and flower producers, the number of SPS interceptions in the EU had reduced significantly. Assessing the situation before and after in such cases would provide a more robust and useful basis on which to measure and report on SPS capacity-building for trade.

It should however be noted that the communications strategy has been developed and implemented with a part-time external expert and that this is insufficient to deliver the expected communications.

STDF results booklet Example Results

“PARTNERSHIPS IN SENEGAL BOOST SAFE CABBAGE PRODUCTION AND REGIONAL EXPORTS” (PG 302) p.32: “Increased farmer productivity – from 15 to 30 tonnes per hectare; improved quality – pesticide residues dropped reassuring customers of non-toxic products, with benefits for public health and the environment; more competitive prices – processing costs fell by 42%.”

“STRONGER PHYTOSANITARY CONTROLS HELP UGANDA’S FLOWER EXPORTS TO GROW” (PG 335) p.35: “A streamlined inspection and export certification system was set up, together with a surveillance, monitoring and traceability system. A manual with 12 Standard Operating Procedures”

“BUILDING CONFIDENCE IN REGIONAL TRADE THROUGH FOOD INSPECTION IN CENTRAL AMERICA” (PG 344) p.23: “Over 470 inspectors from Central America and the Dominican Republic were successfully trained, creating a cadre of inspectors with the latest skills and knowledge on modern food safety inspection techniques. SME producers also learned about Good Agricultural Practices based on effective inspections during primary production”

Conclusion

Both the M&E and communications functions of the STDF have much improved over the evaluation period. However, these critical tasks are still not sufficiently addressed or resourced within the current STDF structure and need to be strengthened, to ensure that important learning and knowledge is widely promoted and disseminated to beneficiaries.

B2.1.2. How effectively does the STDF engage with the findings generated through the results measurement?

The STDF Secretariat reported that they often use learning from the M&E to adapt and change other PPG and PG applications. Most notably, the STDF places an increasingly greater emphasis on project level logframes and the linkages to the higher level logframe of the STDF itself.

From the assessment of project documents and STDF annual reports, there are clear examples where the learning from STDF deliverables has been used to enhance other activities, but this is ad-hoc (due largely to current time and resource constraints and lack of an adequate M&E framework – see 2.1.3 below). The fact that these examples need to be gathered from reports supports a judgement impression that the STDF needs a more systematic approach to lesson learning.

Founding partners expressed the view that there is insufficient lesson learning from activities and that with growing time-pressure on the STDF Secretariat, this is not likely to improve without specific focus and action.

One founding partner said that the STDF was meant to be about innovative approaches and lesson learning but that in practice, the gathering and use of results and lessons was “disappointing”. Moreover, several founding partners, project implementers and a few donors stated that they would welcome more on lesson learning from PGs and would themselves use these results if they were gathered and presented in a more useful way.

Examples of STDF Utilisation of lessons from M&E

“In March 2017, experiences and lessons from STDF’s work on facilitating and strengthening PPPs to build SPS capacity and promote trade were shared during a breakout session at the Global Food Safety Conference in Houston.” (based on an STDF project in Thailand and Viet Nam). The training modules developed during the project continue to be updated and used today. GFSI published a leaflet about the project” (STDF Annual Report 2017)

Conclusion

While there are ad hoc efforts within the current structure to communicate and disseminate learning from STDF activities, this is not undertaken in a systematic way whereby learning is gathered, assessed, synthesised and used to inform either other work, or to share with STDF partners and beneficiaries to improve their own work in SPS and trade.

B2.1.3 Has the RBM and results reporting functioned sufficiently well?

In so far as the STDF is reporting based on its existing logframe, it is reporting adequately against this framework. It is generally agreed by all stakeholders that the STDF structure is delivering good outputs and this was confirmed by the meta-evaluation: “*STDF projects produce robust results at different results levels*”.

Most donors and founding partners however, are very critical of the logframe²³, which, it is felt, contains targets and indicators which do not reflect adequately the overall goals of the programme. Although improvements have been made in recent years to develop a better framework for M&E, there is a clear need to take this further and improve both the logical framework, and the reporting against it. For example, under outputs of delivering good practice, SPS capacity-building (output 2) is only measured by number of topics, number of visitors to the website, number of external events and number of publications.

This does not indicate whether or not new “good practice” guidelines have been developed or the extent to which they are fit for purpose and can be used by developing country beneficiaries. We believe that the outcome indicators are even weaker. For example, “perceived value by WG members of STDF activities” is too reliant on the subjective views of people who are closely involved in the STDF. This does not link at all to the actual STDF goal: *to promote the increased capacity of developing countries to implement international sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) standards, guidelines and recommendations and hence improve their ability to gain and maintain access to markets*.

Donors call for a stronger theory of change to be delivered, backed up by good indicators that reflect the ambitions and objectives of the STDF and are clearly attributable. A strong results-based management framework is required to monitor and evaluate the STDF against its overall goals in a structured and more straightforward way. This would allow the STDF to draw results, lessons and learning from all activities to feed back into its future activities and provide a stronger platform for communicating results to its constituents.

STDF Logical Framework

Outcome Indicators

- Outcome Indicators of STDF partners and other Working Group (WG) members/observers with relevance and effectiveness of STDF activities and projects/Project Preparation Grants (PPGs)
- Documented cases of collaborative/cross-cutting/innovative/regional approaches to capacity-building facilitated by STDF activities and projects/PPGs

Output Indicators

1. Information exchange and dialogue among providers of SPS capacity-building
 - Information exchange and dialogue among providers of SPS capacity-building donors, observer organizations, beneficiaries)
2. Good practice to support SPS capacity-building identified and disseminated
 - Good practice to support SPS capacity-building identified and disseminated
3. Number of external events attended by the STDF Secretariat
 - Number of external events attended by the STDF Secretariat
 - Enhancing quality of SPS programme design to meet needs of beneficiaries
 - Number of project preparation grants (PPGs) completed with satisfactory outputs
4. Building Capacities in Beneficiary Countries
 - Number of projects completed with satisfactory outputs (as per individual results framework)

Conclusion

Although the STDF is effective in achieving its outputs and outcomes against the agreed logframe, this logframe itself is weak and does not show clear attributable linkages from outputs to results and outcomes to the wider programme goal of increasing capacity in SPS in developing countries to enable trade.

B2.2 Deliverables

B2.2.1 All Outputs: Does the STDF monitor all outputs as per its logframe?

Since 2016, the annual reports have detailed the measurement of outputs against the logframe of the STDF, and these are presented in B1.1.1 above. However, the output and higher-level indicators are not strong in measuring or attributing the outputs to the achievement of the overall programme goal.

Conclusion

Both M&E and annual reports of the STDF show indicators and progress for outputs. However, there is little higher-level measurement of performance in terms of results and outcomes of activities. Although there is anecdotal evidence from some deliverables, it is not presented within a strong analytical framework.

²³ Although it should be noted that as part of the Working Group, donors and partners were integral in developing the existing Logframe.

B2.2.2 All Outputs: Are results communicated effectively?

See B2.1.1 above for the assessment.

In addition, most founding partners' staff interviewed stated that although they commented on proposals and briefings, the results were not communicated back to them. For example, when a founding partner staff member had helped to shape a PG application, they often did not know if the application was successful, and if it was, what the results were in the end. Whilst this may be attributed to internal communications within these organisations, if the STDF wants to continue to benefit from the "good will" and valuable SPS expertise of these staff members, it should seek to ensure, however possible, that there is more effective and direct feedback to key staff. In addition, several donors asked for more presentations on PPG and PG progress and results to be made by implementers and beneficiaries at Working Group level.

Conclusion

STDF communications at a results and higher indicator level need to be stronger so that the overall progress towards STDF's goals is better understood, as well as the contribution of individual deliverables.

Overall assessment of B2

The STDF is measuring and presenting outputs of its deliverables, but a much stronger theory of change and logframe need to be developed with a focus on the linkages between outputs and results/outcomes. These then need to be measured more robustly and presented and communicated in a structured way. In addition, the M&E needs to be embedded into a wider lesson learning mechanism so that effective results and outcomes can be fed back to ensure replication and better dissemination of best practice (and its use) among beneficiaries.

3.3 EFFICIENCY**C1. HAS THE STDF MADE EFFICIENT USE OF TIME AND RESOURCES TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE OUTPUTS?****C1.1 STDF Structure****C1.1.1 How efficient is the STDF in delivering outputs?**

According to the WG surveys carried out by the Secretariat in 2015 and 2017,²⁴ most members of the STDF WG were satisfied with the efficiency of the platform; 100% of 2017 survey respondents and 95% in 2015 were satisfied or fully satisfied on "Responsiveness and efficiency of the STDF Secretariat in servicing the Working Group". Many comments in the same survey pointed out that the Secretariat achieved much, albeit with limited human and budgetary resources. However, some donors and founding partners remarked that although the Secretariat was efficiently delivering on outputs, it was over-stretched and would need more staff if it was to continue to deliver at this level (see C1.1.2 below).

The Secretariat is reported to be highly efficient in organising and preparing for WG meetings with all founding partners, donors and observers reporting that they provide documents well in advance to enable adequate preparation and effective contribution to the meetings. This is also supported by responses from the STDF WG surveys. However, there are some divergent views on the structure of the Working Group meeting itself. On one hand, some donors who do not have expertise in SPS issues are more interested in having a general picture of the STDF results, outcomes, and work plan and in discussing strategic decisions rather than reviewing and approving PGs and PPGs. Some felt that the STDF Secretariat should be delegated to select and approve PPGs and PGs, and that the WG's time should be better used in setting project priorities at a more strategic level, with possibly a more technical sub-group appointed

Working Group Member Survey Assessment

"Respondents were particularly satisfied with the responsiveness and efficiency of the STDF Secretariat in servicing the Working Group, and its role in supporting the review of funding applications." (STDF Annual Report 2015).

"The Secretariat encouraged and facilitated a good working environment, encouraged members to provide timely input for the draft agenda, and circulated all documents for meetings well in advance to ensure transparency and encourage discussion and participation. The Secretariat discussed agendas for Working Group meetings with the Chairperson in advance, and introduced changes to the agenda and format of meetings in an effort to improve the quality and outcomes". (STDF Annual Report 2017).

²⁴ Access to 2017's survey Report: http://www.standardsfacility.org/sites/default/files/Andersson_WGSurvey_WGMar18.pdf

to look at projects in detail. On the other hand, some founding partners and donors (multilateral and/or with SPS expertise) believe that projects should be discussed individually, as is currently the case.

With regard to presentations and technical knowledge shared during the WG meetings, while some donors pointed out that they did not have a particular interest in the technical content, other donors and founding partners considered the presentations to be an important tool of STDF's knowledge platform. A number of Working Group members expressed the view that WG sessions should be clearly divided into separate days, one covering technical (SPS and trade) knowledge and another covering PG/PPG discussions as well as strategic and operational discussions (e.g. on work plan). These members could then choose which sessions to participate in (especially as STDF WG meetings generally keep to schedule).

Conclusion

The STDF is very effective in delivering current outputs, but to continue to deliver, it will be necessary to build certain capacities and expand resources of the Secretariat to adequately support the Facility. WG meetings convene a diverse group of interests and expertise and so not all parts of the WG agenda are considered relevant by all participants. This may be unavoidable, however, to ensure coherent and joined-up oversight and adequately deliver learning and coordination.

C1.1.2 How efficient is the STDF Secretariat in delivering outputs and responding to the different objectives of the Facility?

The Secretariat and its staff are efficient, with a core staff of one head, five professional staff and one support staff members (with some support from interns at some points in time) delivering across all four STDF outputs.

Furthermore, the majority of those interviewed (founding partners, donors and other stakeholders) commented they thought that the Secretariat was effective and efficient, responsive to queries and delivered more efficiently than other programmes they dealt with. In addition, no one interviewed provided any adverse comments on the efficiency or the work ethic of the Secretariat.²⁵

However, some donors expressed a view that if more staff were made available, improvements in M&E and communications could be made, as well as expanding on other activities such as coordination and knowledge platform.

STDF Secretariat activities 2018

- Currently managing 32 active PGs and PPGs;
- In the process of contracting 11 new PGs and PPGs;
- Concluded seven PGs and PPGs in 2018;
- Engaging in monitoring and evaluation activities, including five evaluations (including this one) and five field monitoring missions to STDF PGs;
- Organisation and preparation for 18 STDF coordination events and networking in 2018 and participation by STDF staff in further 47 external events and meetings;
- Developing learning platform content, preparing 10 STDF briefs and contributed to a further 10 publications;
- Communications activities including publishing three reports, two briefing notes, 10 e-news items and one film;
- Reviewing 70 PG and PPG applications for 2018, including full examination and support to the preparation of 19 potentially eligible applications, providing guidance to applicants, and presentation at two Working Group meetings;
- General management and reporting, including preparation of the annual report.

Conclusion

The Secretariat is efficient and delivers quality outputs across its four areas, with a core staff of six currently managing 50 PPG and PGs, undertaking or participating in 55 coordination activities in 2018, 10 knowledge platform activities and supporting the preparation of 70 PPGs and PGs in 2018. In addition, with support of communications and M&E consultants, it manages evaluations and general management. Given this level and quality of outputs, the STDF Secretariat can be considered excellent value for money, which is a view supported by all main STDF stakeholders interviewed. However, the Secretariat staff is over-stretched, and to continue to deliver at this level, more staff resources will be required to support existing activities, as well as to deliver desired improvements in communications and monitoring and evaluation.²⁶

²⁵ Even those critical of the focus of the STDF recognised the efficient and effective work of the Secretariat.

²⁶ This excludes any resource requirements to deliver additional activities that arise from our recommendations.

C1.2 Deliverables

C1.2.1 Coordination and knowledge platform: Does the STDF receive and regularly submit relevant information to its members and do members use this information and for which purpose?

Members have stated that prior to WG the STDF Secretariat submits information and circulates documents in advance. All the documents are well organized on STDF's website and available on the members' homepage.

According to donors and partners interviewed, this information is often redistributed within their own organisations and local offices/representations, depending on the content. However, during the country case studies in Guatemala and Uganda, local offices and delegations of donors and founding partners said they had never heard of the STDF's work, even though the Facility has supported a lot of different projects in those countries. This implies that distribution of information on STDF activities by partners and donors is not as efficient as it should be and STDF lacks visibility in some cases. Some suggested that the STDF could achieve more widespread dissemination if the information were circulated during the WG, but this seems impractical given the volume of information and knowledge involved.

As previously reported, most partners are unsure to what extent information is used within their organisations and stated they were not using or accessing information through the STDF website (see B1.2.2 above). During the field mission to Guatemala and Uganda, local beneficiaries did not know about or use thematic information and mainly used the platform to learn about PG/PPG's rules and application processes.

Conclusion

There is efficient exchange of information among WG members and wider exchange of information and accessing PG data that avoids duplication or informs on STDF project activities on the ground. However, this exchange is limited to individuals and information does not appear to be more widely disseminated throughout partner organisations or beneficiaries in developing countries.

C1.2.2 Projects and PPGs: Are Grants approved and implemented effectively?

With regard to PG/PPG discussions, some founding partners' experts stated that they found the rules on reviewing the grants applications to be unclear, with no particular guidance from STDF on the focus, priorities or overall objectives. Also, some partners and donors said it was unclear why some of the proposals were not tabled or discussed in the WG, as they seemed to meet all the requirements. Although the STDF Secretariat provides full details of these in the WG pre-meeting information, some partners would like to have a more detailed discussion on the PG/PPGs during the WG, suggesting that selection is not always clear.

Most donors, however, believed it was quite unusual that discussions of the WG should be held at the project level. Many said they would prefer to pass the task of approving PGs and PPGs to the Secretariat and partner organisations, who were more interested in the technical discussions. If the STDF fund was a trust fund, members should be able to trust it, according to some donors.

With regard to the application process and implementation of grants, project implementers and beneficiaries in both country case studies (Guatemala and Uganda) stated that STDF Secretariat was very efficient, responding quickly and providing inputs that had been essential support to successful applications. Moreover, the inputs provided by the Secretariat and partners meant the project design was better and implementation more efficient.

STDF is reported to be flexible and adaptive in project management, as reported in the meta-evaluation report, which noted the "general value of allowing for flexibility, innovation and adaptive management in project design and implementation". However, the time-lag in approving some projects was emphasized. These were due to the WG's meetings (only twice per year), the lack of staff at the Secretariat and the time taken to identify and contract implementers. A number of beneficiaries and implementers noted that these delays caused problems in the implementation of some projects.

Conclusion

STDF's PG and PPG applications are processed and approved in a relatively short time, but the selection and prioritisation process is unclear to some partners and beneficiaries. There are issues with implementation delays in sub-contracting and establishing payment arrangements, but in terms of management and inputs during implementation, the STDF Secretariat is very effective in assisting beneficiaries, responding in a timely manner and often being adaptive and allowing flexibility.

Overall assessment of C1

The STDF is a relatively efficient platform, delivering a large number of activities with a limited number of resources, particularly in PG and PPGs. However, the Secretariat is operating at the limit of its capacity. In addition, greater clarity on priorities and objectives need to be provided to all partner staff engaged to allow for more efficient input on review of PG and PPG applications from partners, especially to address concerns of some donors on time spent approving projects at the Working Group meetings. Moreover, the Facility is not making the best use of its partnership to disseminate information and learning to a wider audience of beneficiaries (requiring more specific efforts from WG members to engage and communicate STDF knowledge within their organisations and to their stakeholders).

C2. WHAT FACTORS INFLUENCE DELIVERY AND IMPLEMENTATION OF STDF ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS? HOW ARE RISKS MANAGED? HOW HAVE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PREVIOUS EVALUATION BEEN IMPLEMENTED?

C2.1 Overall Objectives

C2.1.1 Were recommendations from previous evaluations taken into account?

The last Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the STDF for the period 2009 to 2013, covering the 2007-11 and 2012-16 Medium-Term Strategy, concluded with three main recommendations.

The first recommendation was to review and strengthen the Results Based Management Framework (RBMF) with a detailed problem identification exercise, and to develop a clear intervention logic to frame problems and respective solutions. It also suggested that this should be carried out with the support of an external consultant: *“Significant attention and resources went*

to strengthening the STDF’s monitoring and evaluation framework in 2015. Measuring and also effectively communicating the results of the STDF is crucial to learn how STDF can improve, keep members engaged and ensure adequate resources in the STDF Trust Fund. An external expert provided guidance and practical support to monitor and report on implementation of the STDF Medium-Term Strategy (2015-2019), based on the biannual STDF work plan and the STDF Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.” (STDF Annual Report 2015, p.31). In 2017, the M&E expert continued to provide support and guidance to monitor the STDF’s progress and performance, including support to develop the biennial Working Group survey and to carry out a meta-evaluation of 22 externally evaluated STDF projects.

Regarding the second recommendation, increasing regional cooperation, many PGs are regional in nature, and as discovered during the country case studies in Guatemala and Uganda, implementers of many projects are regional organisations: Organismo Internacional Regional de Sanidad Agropecuaria (OIRSA), Instituto Interamericano de Cooperación para la Agricultura (IICA) and CABI. While the STDF was able to deliver a regional component to projects through working with regional organisations as implementers of PGs in Central America and East Africa, it is evident that regional cooperation remains limited.

Concerning the One Health Initiative, during the Working Group of October 2016, different presentations were given by FAO, WHO and OIE to provide the partners’ different perspectives on the subject. There are also some examples of cooperation in the EIF/STDF partnership, such as the joint publication [Analysis of consideration given to SPS issues in DTIS](#), in October 2016. However, there is not much evidence of STDF’s effort to strengthen its voice in the global Aid for Trade Initiative, or of increased cooperation with the GFSP. There have been a few presentations but nothing substantial on really advocating the increasing importance or share of SPS capacity-building in A4T allocations.

The third recommendation, to strengthen the STDF Secretariat’s capacity and ensure effective management of the Facility, has been addressed through the recruitment for an additional post at grade six (entry level) in 2015. Also, two external consultants were hired to strengthen management capacity: a communications officer and an M&E specialist.

STDF’s Mid-Term Review 2014 – recommendations

1. Review the Medium-Term Strategy and strengthen the Results Based Management Framework (RBMF) to guide STDF’s activities and become a useful tool for the Secretariat when managing the facility.
2. Increase and improve cooperation with regional and global players.
3. Strengthen the STDF Secretariat’s capacity and ensure effective management of the facility.

Conclusion

The STDF has refined most of its objectives, strategies and priorities to respond to the MTR of 2014. The platform has invested a lot of effort to develop its M&E framework and strengthen its Results Based Management Framework (RBMF). Also, the Secretariat has hired additional full-time staff members to address the current heavy workload and improved its Operational Rules. On the regional and global cooperation, the Secretariat has also made an effort to improve its work in this area, although there is not much evidence on some of the recommended partnerships.

C2.2 STDF Structure

C2.2.1 Does the STDF manage adaptively and mitigate risks effectively to ensure efficient delivery of outputs?

The STDF Secretariat has been developing a more systematic approach to adaptively manage and mitigate risks to the implementation of its work plan and activities. The Mid-Term Strategy document includes a logframe that has sections on risks and assumptions for each Output, but these are assumptions rather than risks, and there is no information on adaptive management or how learning leads to adaptations.

Over the evaluation period, 2014 to 2018, the STDF had two Work Plans, one covering 2015-2016 and another covering 2017-2018. Both documents have a section on risk assessment and mitigation, in which the Secretariat outlines the risks and their planned mitigation processes. However, it is not clear how the STDF structure responds to new information, changes and risks, such as realising project risks despite them being assessed during the review process. Again, there is no information on adaptive management and how learning leads to adaptations.

Although the 2015 and 2016 Annual Reports do not include any risk framework or assessment, they reported and emphasised the close cooperation with STDF partners in developing and delivering STDF's bi-annual work plans, which contributed in some way to mitigating risks.

The STDF M&E Framework and Communications Plan do not refer to risks, apart from the logframe requirement for projects outlined in the M&E Framework, and again there is also no information on adaptive management and how learning leads to adaptations.

In the implementation of PPG and PGS, the STDF appears to be adaptive to risks, and all projects are required to have a risk matrix that the STDF implementers and Secretariat can monitor. According to the STDF's meta-evaluation, based on the assessment of 22 completed external evaluations of STDF projects, these evaluations have identified several external risks to project implementation (meta-evaluation, p.14): "Many evaluation reports discuss external factors that affected negatively the implementation of projects. Most of these factors, such as lack of political will and local capacity, are not surprising, but taken together they give concrete examples of the type of risks and conditions STDF projects need to deal with".

STDF Annual Reporting on Workplan Delivery

"In 2015, the STDF Secretariat worked closely with STDF partners and other organisations to deliver the STDF bi-annual work plan. This focused on facilitating a range of coordination activities, organising Policy Committee and Working Group meetings, outreach and participation in selected events and training workshops, project preparation, review, implementation and evaluation and website and film development." (Annual Report 2015).

"In 2016, the STDF Secretariat **worked closely with STDF partners and other organisations to deliver the STDF bi-annual Work Plan**. This focused on facilitating a range of coordination activities, organising Working Group meetings, outreach and participation in selected events and training workshops, project preparation, review, implementation and evaluation and website and film development. Working Group members also discussed and agreed on a new bi-annual Work Plan for 2017-2018." (Annual Report 2016).

In the 2017 Annual Report, the STDF introduced a risk framework with risks identified, impact and likelihood estimated, and mitigation actions outlined and taken, such as:

- STDF Secretariat's preparatory work in advance of WG meetings to mitigate against the risk of "Insufficient active participation in Working Group";
- Knowledge and information sharing, participation in external events, targeted guidance provided by the Secretariat, and dissemination of information by STDF members, to mitigate against the risk of "Insufficient number of high-quality PPG and project applications received by STDF";
- Active engagement with existing and potential donors and development partners by the Secretariat to mitigate against "Insufficient funding available in STDF Trust Fund";
- The hiring of temporary staff as a result of internal changes, the possibility of benefitting from inputs from interns and young professionals in 2017, and use of external experts on M&E and communications, to mitigate against "STDF Secretariat not fully staffed and operational" and;
- Risk assessment of individual project risks during the project application review and a section on risk identification and mitigation is included in the application, to mitigate against the risk of "Implementation of STDF projects influenced by external conditions" (Annual Report 2017, p.65-66).

STDF project management is adaptive and according to the meta-evaluation report “general value of allowing for flexibility, innovation and adaptive management in project design and implementation.” This is also illustrated by flexibility during implementation of PGs, as detailed in C1.2.2 above.

Conclusion

The STDF Secretariat has made increased efforts to determine and mitigate risk in delivery of its work plan, including project grants. The Secretariat seems to be adaptive to learning in relation to PPG/PGs (although there is little evidence of responsiveness to learning on other deliverables, specifically relating to coordination and knowledge). The learning/feedback loop needs to be reinforced with a formal review or mechanism that would gather lesson learning in a structured way and integrate this into the future activities and procedures of the Secretariat.

C2.3 Deliverables

C2.3.1 PPG: Did PPGs support increase in Aid for Trade (A4T) activities in beneficiary countries (that has led to more than would have been expected without STDF support)?

Donors were unable to provide any comment or information on the importance and spending of SPS capacity-building in the overall Aid for Trade (A4T) framework. Developing country experts commented that SPS capacity in general got little attention nationally and with much of the donor funding agreed between donor and beneficiary country, SPS capacity-building was generally not prioritised. This was also verified with donors and beneficiaries in the country case study in Uganda, where SPS capacity-building was not seen as a priority for donor funding (or government budget) despite Uganda being reliant on agricultural development and exports. The STDF therefore, does not appear to have elevated SPS issues nationally or globally at a donor/A4T level, beyond raising issues at WTO SPS Committee, which does not involve donor decision-makers or influencers. The only relevant activities have been occasional participation in and presentations at A4T events and WTO Trade and Development Committee.

Conclusion

There is little data available (current or historical) to suggest that SPS capacity-building activities enjoy a larger share in A4T or that many PPGs (or other STDF activities) have led to significant increases in A4T funding.

C2.3.2 Projects: How does the STDF monitor and manage project implementation to ensure delivery and risk management?

The STDF Secretariat monitors and manages project implementation closely. According to the evaluation survey (ANNEX 7), 16.7% of implementers communicate with the STDF Secretariat on a monthly basis, and a further 40.7% on a quarterly basis, which shows a relatively high level of monitoring by the STDF Secretariat. While some partners felt that the level of monitoring risked becoming too high and might be inefficient, the STDF Secretariat has responsibility not only for risk management but also for learning and feedback, which does require the high level of engagement that takes place. The meta-evaluation concluded that: *“Frequent reporting to STDF was considered a very effective way of solving problems in a timely manner”*. The evaluation of a project in Nicaragua (STDF/PG/155) also concluded that: *“Thorough initial planning in combination with revision of plans to accommodate unexpected changes was a key success factor in the MOTSSA project.”*

Also, according to some project implementers and some project beneficiaries, this frequent exchange of information and guidance from the STDF Secretariat often provides very positive reviews and impact on outputs and deliverables. Therefore, the STDF Secretariat not only constantly communicates with implementers to manage project implementation, but is also able to solve problems and accommodate change.

Conclusion

The STDF is very efficient in the monitoring and risk management of PGs and PPGS, although this is necessarily resource heavy, as all projects are tracked and managed by the STDF Secretariat and guided to keep on track. The communication between the STDF and the implementers may vary depending on the project implementer, being more or less real time.

Overall assessment of C2

The close management and communication between the STDF Secretariat and both project implementers and beneficiaries in developing countries has contributed to effective implementation and management of risks for these projects, although it is therefore necessarily resource heavy. This is especially important where the STDF works in more innovative areas, as these are by nature more risky. Recommendations from the mid-term evaluation have been seriously considered and generally, implemented. However, there is less formal consideration or assessment of project level evaluations, and risks related to the knowledge platform and coordination mechanism need more attention.

3.4 SUSTAINABILITY

D1. ARE THE RESULTS AND OUTCOMES ACHIEVED BY THE STDF - AS KNOWLEDGE PLATFORM AND FUNDING MECHANISM - LIKELY TO BE SUSTAINABLE?

D1.1 Deliverables

D1.1.1 Knowledge platform: Is learning (including project and PPG results and good practices) being shared in the STDF knowledge platform?

The main mechanisms through which the knowledge platform is delivered are the STDF website and other communication media, events and thematic topic activities. The STDF website is the main repository for documentation on PGs and PPGs, where it is possible to find a vast array of information on different pages. However, it is not consolidated or assessed in any constructive or accessible way. Developing country experts and donors commented that more work on gathering and presenting lessons across activities was needed to guide partners and beneficiaries to use this knowledge (see B.1.2.2. for more details).

Finally, most stakeholders interviewed (partners, donors, implementers and beneficiaries) agree that the STDF must communicate better the *learning and good practices* from projects and how to promote more outcomes than outputs, if the results are to be sustainable. During both country case studies, none of the beneficiaries, competent authorities, founding partners' local offices or donors were aware of, or used STDF knowledge platform or best practice guidelines. The absence of using STDF knowledge on the ground constitutes a missed opportunity and therefore this knowledge risks being lost.

Conclusion

The STDF has accumulated a great deal of lessons and best practice, and practical knowledge for SPS capacity-building across all its deliverables. However, the knowledge is not being analysed and presented in a way that can be readily used by partners and beneficiaries to improve their own work in a real and practical way. Further work is needed to explore how to best package this to make sure it is not only relevant, but can be used in the future in order to make the STDF knowledge platform the "go to" resources for SPS capacity building for trade.

D1.1.2 PPGs: Does the STDF have a mechanism/plan to follow up on results of PPGs?

PPGs are intended to be used for needs assessment to inform policy nationally or develop new SPS capacity-building projects but based on analysis of documents and interviews with partners and in-country, the extent to which PPGs are nationally owned is uncertain, as is their lasting impact. In the Annual Reports from 2014 to 2017, there is not much detail on PPG follow-up, but rather generic descriptions about beneficiary participation or consultation. Based on these descriptions it is difficult to gauge the depth of this engagement, and more importantly, ownership.

During the country case study in Uganda, donors commented that following a PPG, the beneficiary government would use it to tout a project to all donors, and also to the STDF itself, but if this failed, the PPG would be forgotten.

In the Annual Reports from 2014 to 2017 there is no information on conversion rates between PPGs and PGs. There is also a time lag between PPGs and PGs, and when reference is made to projects, there is no mention of whether they follow on from a successful PPG. However, in the section on “Results of selected PPGs” in Annual Reports 2014-2015, there are several examples of PPGs that led to PG proposals. The Annual Report 2017 differs from the previous reports in terms of structure, but it still refers to seven PPGs that have led to PGs or are expected to lead to PG proposals (Annual Report 2017, p.30-32, 34, 46 and 56). However, there is no description as to how these PPGs have led to PGs or other activities, or what the STDF’s role was in this process.

Examples of National Engagement in PPGs

The Annual Report 2016 describes progress and results of five selected PPGs. All these descriptions include general references to engagement. For example, PPG 447 in Tajikistan “enabled stakeholders from the public and private sector in Tajikistan to identify priorities to improve the export competitiveness of SMEs based on the National Food Safety Strategy, and to develop a project to address them.” (Annual Report 2016, p.31-32).

The Annual Report 2017 likewise highlights involvement of local stakeholders in PPGs. For example: “In Guinea, weaknesses in phytosanitary controls, regulatory gaps and plant pests challenge agricultural production and trade. An STDF PPG approved in March 2017 is allowing the Ministry of Agriculture to follow up on the findings of the IPPC’s PCE Tool and develop a new project that improves the country’s phytosanitary system.” (Annual report 2017, p. 34).

According to the risk register in Annual Report 2017: “Results from STDF projects and PPGs (as evidenced from project reports and evaluations) show that understanding local contexts and local ownership are central for success.” (Annual Report 2017, p. 64).

Conclusion

It is uncertain the extent to which PPGs are owned and the extent to which findings are embedded into the national structures or used to develop follow up projects over the long-term. The STDF acknowledges that understanding local contexts and local ownership are central for success of PPGs, but in reality, apart from projects that are funded under the STDF, there is little information on the contribution of these to follow up activities (either government actions or other donor projects).

D1.1.3 Projects: What does the STDF do to follow up after end of project?

Most of the projects are highly successful during implementation, with high levels of inputs and guidance from both project implementers and the STDF Secretariat. However, post project, there is little follow-up. According to STDF’s 2018 meta-evaluation report “*In terms of performance, STDF projects score very highly on relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, but lower on impact and sustainability*” and that projects focused on sector development (working through a whole value chain) demonstrate a higher contribution to impact and sustainability than projects on technical assistance (projects targeting specific governmental groups) and institution-building projects (engaging wider public and private sector groups).

The Results Booklet published by the STDF attempts to highlight the ‘sustaining impact’ in each of the 22 PGs and three PPGs, in the areas of food safety, plant health, animal health and cross-cutting SPS issues. It is not clear, however, how the STDF monitors this, or whether results from previous projects have been embedded into projects designed since, and what the process is for this to happen. Follow-up largely depends on the commitment and ability of the national stakeholder implementing the project. Even where there is strong ownership, however, national entities may not be able to follow up without some external support and opportunities to embed capacity may be lost.

Sustainability of Projects

There is no mention of sustainability in the 2014 Annual Report. In the 2015, 2016 and 2017 Annual Reports, some selected descriptions of project progress and results outline sustainability issues; for example the PG328, “Beyond Compliance: Integrated Systems Approach for Pest Risk Management in Southeast Asia” of the 2016 Annual Report, where: “*Elements that promoted sustainability under the project included an improved understanding of how to apply the systems approach among government and industry, the NPPO’s active engagement and support to farmers and the level of understanding and compliance by selected producers and exporters.*” (Annual Report 2016, p. 45).

Conclusion

Some STDF projects may continue to have impact after they end, although it is unclear whether this is a result of embedding sustainability into the PPGs or STDF Secretariat follow up; or whether it hinges on the commitment and capacity of the local stakeholder. While there is some monitoring (and evaluation) post-project completion, there is no systematic follow-up by the STDF to ensure sustainability, with the focus on results gathering rather than on embedding capacity.

Overall assessment of D1

Sustainability is considered in project design, but there is little evidence that processes to sustain impact are actually built in to STDF activities, with lesson learning and best practice distributed widely across many documents and activities that are not brought together and appropriately packaged for future use. Sustaining the impact of STDF PGs and PPGs depends mostly on the extent of national ownership and capacity, and on the STDF. There is scope to integrate sustainability considerations more thoroughly into all STDF activities and ensure that lesson learning, particularly relating to new and innovative practices, are readily utilisable and are being used to enhance knowledge.

D2. WHAT ARE MAJOR FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE ACHIEVEMENT OR NON-ACHIEVEMENT OF SUSTAINABILITY?

D2.1 Deliverables

D2.1.1 and D2.1.2 Coordination/ Dialogue / Knowledge platform: Does the STDF encourage uptake of good practices, emerging from projects, among beneficiaries, donors and partners?

This is addressed in D1.1.1 above.

D2.1.3 PPGs: Are the STDF's partnerships and role with international agencies pivotal in decisions for follow-up/implementation of recommendations/findings?

There is not much evidence that the STDF is using its partnerships and facilities to leverage uptake of good practice, follow-up to ensure sustainability or funding of new projects resulting from PPGs. In the case of funding, the leverage quoted in STDF annual reports is largely "in-kind" contributions from beneficiaries and project implementers.

Regarding the co-funding of the new project in Uganda, the country case study revealed that this was more about coincidence of objectives than any use of the STDF partnership. This is also backed up by Annual Report 2017, which seems to suggest this happens through the STDF network: *"STDF experiences show how mobilizing resources is an on-going process that requires extensive time and efforts. From the project design stage, cooperation and synergies with donors, development partners and the private sector is key"*.

Project Leveraging

According to the STDF 2017 Annual Report, "STDF funds for PPGs and projects approved in 2017 - totalling US\$ 4,656,513 - generated an estimated US\$1,764,044 in additional resources. This included budgeted in-kind contributions as well as funds, from national governments, other donors and development partners, and the private sector. From 2004 until the end of 2017, STDF funds for projects and PPGs had mobilised resources worth an estimated US\$25.3 million for beneficiaries in developing countries." (Annual Report 2017, p. 66).

The 2018 meta-evaluation also highlights the STDF Secretariat's role in leveraging resources to projects: *"Another remedy to resource constraints is obviously to leverage resources from partners and other donors. In recent years, this has been a recurrent feature of STDF projects and monitored by the STDF Secretariat. The evaluation reports are, however, relatively silent on this issue, except for the cattle project in Costa Rica (STDF/PG/116), where this was done successfully"* (Meta-evaluation, p.10).

The STDF seems to have recognised this issue, requesting PPG beneficiaries to consider preparing project concepts and designs in other donor application templates. For example, during the country case study in Guatemala, it was found that a condition to PPG 539 approval had been to write the application in the format required for other donor funding applications, to be able to easily find funds after its conclusion. One of the main objectives of the consultant implementing the PPG was to find potential donors to the project. The success of this approach is not yet known.

In terms of wider project and knowledge platform follow-up, STDF donors and partners do not appear to exploit the potential of the Facility structure to encourage sustainability. In the country case study in Uganda, the founding partners' country officers were totally unaware of the past STDF projects and learning, although they expressed a desire to be more closely involved in STDF activities (even if not directly involved in implementation) as it aligned with their thinking and strategies nationally.

Conclusion

STDF partners and donors do not take sufficient advantage of the Facility's connections and network to significantly increase the chances of implementation of projects/recommendations from PPGs, nor do they make sufficient use of the STDF structure to drive the use of knowledge or best practice.

D2.1.4 Projects: Are the results of projects sustainable?

This is addressed in D1.1.3 above, which covers the STDF's follow-up of projects.

Overall assessment of D2

Sustainability of STDF activities largely depends on the extent of national ownership and capacity, which by themselves may not be sufficient to sustain impact without STDF follow-up. STDF partners do not actively follow up on projects, despite a local presence. There is clear scope for STDF partners in-country to engage actively in follow up rather than relying on the STDF Secretariat, which is constrained by its location in Geneva and by tight resources. Active local follow-up by partners could help to generate the traction needed to facilitate longer-term sustainability.

3.5 IMPACT

E1. HOW DO STDF ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS CONTRIBUTE TO OBSERVED CHANGES IN BENEFICIARY COUNTRIES?

E1.1 Deliverables

E1.1 All Outputs: Have activities led to observed changes in SPS and market access in beneficiary countries?

At an impact level, the goal of the STDF is to promote the increased capacity of developing countries to implement international sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) standards, guidelines and recommendations, and hence improve their ability to gain and maintain access to markets. The issues surrounding a sound theory of change, appropriate logframe and indicators, and depth and breadth of M&E (which have been assessed in the previous sections) necessarily limit the amount of evidence available on impact. For the PPGs and PGs, there is widespread evidence in the STDF annual reports between 2014 and 2017 of improvement in market access for agri- and agri-processed trade from developing countries. For example, in the 2017 STDF Annual Report, of the 49 PPG and PGs reported on, there are ten that specify having contributed to improved market access. Although this may seem low, many of the projects will be immature, with no results or impact realised. Similarly, and perhaps with a more realistic overview, in the recently published Results Booklet, 40% of project results mentioned improved market access.

Examples of STDF improving market access

According to the 2015 Annual Report, the thematic work on P-IMA and safe trade changes have led to market access improvements: "SPS authorities in some countries, including Lao PDR, the Philippines and Zambia, have already implemented some of the recommendations to improve the implementation of SPS measures to facilitate safe trade. Similarly, there is growing evidence of positive, spill-over effects of the work of STDF on the development and use of a framework to prioritize SPS investments for market access." (Annual Report 2015, p.10-11)

The meta-evaluation states STDF projects score lower on "impact and sustainability", but better when focused on sector development (refer D.1.1.3 above) and was corroborated by country level case studies, with ample evidence of market access improvements as a result of PPGs and PGs. In Guatemala, the "Improving veterinary legislation" project (STDF/PG/358), which had the object to support OIRSA countries in establishing an animal disease program by improving legislation, has clearly improved SPS regulations in Guatemala. According to the Guatemalan competent authorities, the legislation is aiding Guatemala's trade negotiations with Mexico, and will be essential for accessing Mexican meat markets as a direct result. In Uganda, it was reported across the PGs that the number of interceptions and rejections in targeted sectors and markets (flowers in EU and maize, fish and dairy in Kenya) had substantially reduced. This is directly attributable to several specific projects, and provides Uganda with improved market access and trade. However, this is not to suggest the other PPGs and PGs have not, or will not contribute to the overall goal of the STDF and help open up or maintain market access; it is just not apparent yet, or they are not visible or attributable. For example, a project on collecting data for MRLS to allow approvals for use at Codex and thus improve market access has led to submissions at Codex in Africa, Asia and Latin America, and the process of agreeing international pesticide MRLs for tropical products is well under way and will eventually lead to opening markets for many minor crops in developing countries.

Similarly, the knowledge platform and coordination activities of the STDF appear to have substantial potential to improve market access as well as promote and lead to capacity-building in SPS for market access and trade beyond STDF project activities. However, there is no framework to assess the impact of these activities at all, so in the absence of any tangible evidence, no further assessment can be made.

Overall assessment of E1

There are clear and tangible examples of how the STDF has improved market access for beneficiary countries, particularly through its work in PPGs and more especially in PGs. However, these impacts are limited by the number of successful projects in the STDF, which is related to the scale of its funding disbursements. Although the success rate (especially considering longer-term impacts) may be high, the overall impact on developing countries as a whole is small. While theoretically its work on coordination and knowledge platform would, or rather should, have had much bigger and sustained impact on developing country beneficiaries, it is unclear to what extent this has actually occurred.

E2. HOW HAS THE STDF HAD AN INFLUENCE ON THE SPS AND AID FOR TRADE POLICIES AND PRIORITIES?

E2.1 Deliverables

E2.1.1 All Outputs: Has the STDF increased prioritization of SPS issues in Aid for Trade (A4T)?

Donors interviewed at the WG and during the country case studies all reported that they had not seen any increase in SPS capacity-building, either in general or as a result of STDF activities. The STDF has made efforts to raise SPS issues through participation in a diverse range of fora including the WTO Trade and Development Committee, working with EIF, and reporting at conferences and events on A4T. The STDF reports several of these activities in its annual reports.

However, with the overall A4T commitments from WTO members being US\$ 55 billion per annum (2015 A4T Review), this kind of leveraging is not significant. Nevertheless, the STDF has been increasingly participating in trade-related areas, to influence and prioritise SPS within other structures, such as the trade facilitation agreement (TFA).

Some founding members reported this had had a positive effect within national TFA Committees to seek out and include SPS competent authorities in discussions, and work with the TFAF itself to prioritise (or at least include) SPS-related border issues (e.g. when designing single window operations).

The 2017 STDF Annual Report, for example, points out how the STDF has informed EU's Aid for Trade Strategy 2017 on key SPS issues: *"The STDF's work provided valuable input in the development of the EU updated "Aid for Trade" Strategy 2017, which builds on 10 years of EU Aid for Trade assistance. Good practices to strengthen SPS capacity - identified through the STDF's work on facilitating safe trade and other topics - will be very useful as this Strategy rolls out. Globally, the EU and its Member States are the biggest provider of Aid for Trade, and the 2017 Strategy aims to improve and better target this assistance, with a strong focus on fighting poverty and creating more and better jobs through trade and investment, particularly in Least Developed Countries and fragile situations"* (Annual Report 2017, p. 57).

Also, according to the STDF's Results Booklet, one out of eleven completed projects that were in implementation between 2014 and 2017, have been successful in securing follow-up from donors. The project grants that supported Africa, Latin America and Southeast Asia to meet pesticide standards for export (STDF/PG/337, STDF/PG/359, STDF/PG/436) have led to further investment of over US\$550,000 to expand low-risk pesticide options for tropical produce from the USDA and the private sector.

Overall assessment of E2

Although the STDF has worked to raise the awareness of the importance of SPS capacity-building to enable trade, and particularly within the context of the Geneva processes, there is no verifiable evidence that this has resulted in increased prioritisation of SPS issues in the overall A4T agenda or donor partners' activities. However, anecdotal evidence suggest that STDF may have had greater leverage in putting SPS issues into the agenda of related trade activities, such as the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, with an indirect impact on the prioritisation of SPS within both policy and A4T agenda.

3.6 CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

F1. TO WHAT EXTENT HAVE CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES (GENDER, ENVIRONMENT AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION) BEEN MAINSTREAMED IN THE STDF?

F1.1 Overall Objectives

F1.1.1 Is the STDF Secretariat aware of major gender, environmental and poverty issues relevant to SPS?

In 2015, the STDF Working Group decided that cross-cutting issues (gender and environment) should, where possible and relevant, be addressed more systematically in STDF projects. PG/PPG and guidance notes for applicants were revised to include these aspects. A key recommendation from the 2018 STDF meta-evaluation was also to further integrate cross-cutting issues into project design and implementation. Since then the STDF has tried to actively address and integrate cross-cutting issues in its project applications and knowledge platform.

Climate and the environment seem to be much more aligned to STDF activities and SPS in general, particularly regarding the use of chemicals and their effects on the environment, and the effects of climate change on disease and pests. The STDF has prepared a briefing paper on climate change, and has participated in many related events. Moreover, climate and environment have appeared as key integrated subjects in many of the PPGs and PGs including:

- “The STDF-funded project reduced the excessive use and misuse of pesticides and increased farmer productivity from 15 to 30 tonnes per hectare. Producers gained new market shares in the region and exports went from 1,900 tonnes in 2008 to 6,000 tonnes in 2014. As pesticide residues dropped, customers were reassured of non-toxic products, with benefits for the environment in protecting biodiversity and conserving water and soil resources. Following the project, AUMN have been involved in wider development projects to transfer good phytosanitary practices to manage environmental security in the Niayes region, as well as to strengthen land and ecosystem management in the context of climate change” (2017 STDF Annual Report).
- “An STDF regional project, approved in October 2017, will help COMESA member states to use P-IMA to prioritise and integrate SPS investments into CAADP and other policy and financing plans for trade, climate change and the environment”(2017 STDF Annual Report).

Integration of gender in projects seems to be more about identifying women beneficiaries or participants rather than integration of gender issues into SPS activities. For example, the projects on flower markets in Uganda (STDF/PG/335) and onion cooperative training in Vietnam (STDF/PG/326) where gender has been addressed through benefitting women in project-specific value chains (See Annual Report 2015).

The STDF published a Briefing Note in 2016 on “Inclusive Trade Solutions: women in SPS capacity-building”, which explains how and why the STDF addresses gender-related issues in its projects and thematic work. Also, STDF’s Annual Report 2017 was re-structured to accommodate for reporting results against the Sustainable Development Goals, including poverty reduction, gender equality and environmental issues: “*STDF’s project cycle looks at the impact on women and the environment, from application to project review and evaluation, capturing the benefits in project logframes. Throughout 2017, good practice lessons on how STDF projects have built women’s skills and know-how to meet SPS measures, and benefitted the environment, were shared through multi-media, news, events and publications.*” Some donors, however, believe that the STDF should do more on cross-cutting issues without losing the interest in the SPS topics.. One of the feedback points from the WG member survey conducted in December 2017 and reported in the report was to “develop more evidence and visibility on how the STDF’s work supports the Sustainable Development Goals, including on poverty reduction and gender”. Therefore, the STDF should target more on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework, as most donors and partners can relate to this framework.

Some founding partners and observers interviewed, nevertheless, think that over-focusing on cross-cutting issues may dilute the STDF’s attention to SPS issues, especially since the issues are not well defined. They stated it might be a major problem for the STDF to try to force cross-cutting issues to be addressed in all projects for presentation or statistics on women affected or benefitting from a project. However, other founding members and donors stated they would like to better understand whether gender is actually an issue within SPS capacity-building and not just have

Cross-cutting issues in STDF’s work:

“Following discussions in the Working Group, the STDF project and PPG application forms and the Guidance Note for Applicants were revised to encourage applicants to consider and address pertinent cross-cutting issues. These include: (i) gender-specific needs and opportunities, equality effects of proposed interventions and gender-disaggregated impacts; and (ii) positive/negative environmental consequences and/or expected higher-level environmental impacts. Some examples of the gender and environmental benefits of selected STDF projects are illustrated in Box 9.” (Annual Report 2015, p. 20)

projects reporting on number of women trained as inspectors. Therefore, STDF has a role in better defining and understanding the role and importance of these cross cutting issues in SPS capacity building and trade.

Overall assessment of F1

The issue of climate change and environment was the subject of a thematic topic, and therefore in some of the STDF knowledge platform and coordination activities. The issue of climate is understood and addressed, although it is not visible within PPGs and PGs. Conversely, gender has not yet been a real topic in the knowledge platform or coordination activities in specific relation to SPS capacity-building. Within projects, however, gender is highlighted but addressed more broadly as “impact on women” rather than as gender-related SPS issues. A recent presentation by ICTSD and Australia at the STDF WG on the role of gender in SPS capacity-building highlighted gaps in knowledge and understanding worldwide, and perhaps this could be a future thematic area for the STDF to explore.

F1.2 Deliverables

F1.2.1 All Outputs: Are there any cross-cutting issues addressed in STDF activities?

This is partly addressed within F1.1 above. However, although cross cutting-issues are observed in STDF activities both in planning and implementation (particularly SDGs), they are not explicitly targeted within the M&E process.

In 2016, the STDF revised its Guidance Note for Applicants, to encourage applicants to consider pertinent cross-cutting issues. The STDF explicitly highlighted gender-specific needs and opportunities as well as positive and negative environmental consequences. Also, the Annual Report 2017 was structured around SDGs and the STDF’s work. The report also includes case studies of PPGs and PGs that address cross-cutting issues of gender and environment in addition to other objectives. However, there is no evidence of explicit monitoring of those activities. The 2017 Annual Report explicitly says that more can be done to improve communications on how the platform contributes to the UN’s 2030 agenda, and that the next strategy is to focus on that matter.

Overall assessment of F2

As part of STDF PPGs and PGs, gender is currently being included (or advocated) within applications. In the new format of the annual report, the STDF has reported about its operations against sustainable development goals, so that cross-cutting issues are not only observed in the planning and implementation of STDF activities, but are also being reported against.