

EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE STANDARDS AND TRADE DEVELOPMENT FACILITY

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Codex	Codex Alimentarius Commission
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DCE	Developing Country Expert
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFD	Financing for Development
GRP	Good Regulatory Practice
HR	Human Resources
IPPC	International Plant Protection Convention
KII	Key Informant Interview
LAC	Latin American and Caribbean Region
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PA	Partnership Assessment
PC	Policy Committee
PEC	Project Economics Consulting
PG	Project Grant
PIE	Project Impact Evaluation
PPG	Project Preparation Grant
RA	Results Analysis
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SG	Steering Group
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary
STDF	Standards and Trade Development Facility
TBT	Technical Barriers to Trade
TOR	Terms of Reference
WB	World Bank
WG	Working Group
WHO	World Health Organization
WOAH	World Organisation for Animal Health (formerly OIE)
WTO	World Trade Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report covers the independent Evaluation of the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) for the strategy period 2020-2024 and was commissioned from Project Economics Consulting by the World Trade Organization (WTO) on behalf of the STDF. It was guided by professional standards, WTO requirements, and STDF's monitoring and evaluation guidelines, which are aligned with Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) evaluation criteria. Management of the evaluation process was provided by the Working Group, as represented by a Steering Group sub-committee and by the STDF Secretariat.
2. The findings presented here are based on a **mixed methods** approach that includes **context analysis**, **contribution analysis**, and elements of **outcome identification**. Findings have been triangulated across data sources and have been validated by the STDF Working Group (WG).

WHAT WE DID

3. The evaluation includes three primary workstreams, intended to cover and triangulate across twenty-one evaluation questions which were defined in the evaluation Terms of Reference and revised in the Inception Report. Those workstreams are: (1) A **Partnership Assessment**, aimed at understanding the structure, strengths and weaknesses of the global platform; (2) A **Results Analysis** which assesses performance over the strategy period and the extent to which outcomes and impacts were achieved and sustained, and (3) Three **Project Impact Evaluations** used to add to the evidence base across all questions and to better understand the experience of grant recipients and beneficiaries on the ground.
4. Information collected via these workstreams was arrayed against an evaluation matrix to assure that findings by evaluation question could be triangulated across sources or, if that were not possible, could be appropriately identified.
5. Following field work and an initial assessment of the information collected, preliminary findings were presented to the Working Group in a sensemaking process to ensure that the evaluation team's assessments were fact-based and to co-create the recommendations presented in this report, based on those findings. A draft of this report was made available to the entirety of the STDF WG for review. One hundred and twenty comments, made by 12 WG members plus the Secretariat were addressed.

THE DATA WE USED TO ARRIVE AT OUR FINDINGS

6. Data used to support the evaluation findings were collected from a variety of sources and represent both quantitative and qualitative information. These include:
 - Two surveys of the partnership
 - A Secretariat staff survey
 - Two project beneficiary surveys
 - STDF monitoring data
 - Interviews with over 130 stakeholders (founding & other partners, donors),

- staff, implementing partners and beneficiaries
- Field visits to beneficiaries in five countries
- WTO data
- World Bank data
- International trade data
- Other UN survey and trade data
- STDF surveys, reports, communications, and internal memos

DATA WE COLLECTED

7. Two surveys of the partnership were undertaken for the evaluation. One covered the network and interactions between partners and sub-networks around SPS issues and the second covered opinion on the performance of the STDF over the current period. A third survey of current and former Secretariat staff covered staff, administrative and Human Resources (HR) issues. The overall, collective response rate was 81 of 136 distributed.
8. Online surveys of beneficiaries and other stakeholders were conducted for two of the project impact evaluations. One was in Latin America, in Spanish, and the other in Mozambique and South Africa in Portuguese and English.
9. The evaluation also relies on data collected from the STDF Secretariat and third parties. These include STDF's monitoring data collected from LogAlto, Annual Reports, and project reports. Also collected were World Bank data on international economic performance, trade data collected from the United Nation's Comtrade database, SPS alert data collected from the WTO, and aid-for-trade data collected from the OECD.
10. The primary limitations to the data collected were limited survey response rates (about 60%), the lag in trade data reporting to Comtrade, the lack of cross-national income data by sector, challenges rolling up STDF monitoring data to programmatic indicators and the limited number of in-scope projects with existing ex-post evaluations.

WHAT WE READ

11. In addition to quantitative data, the evaluation relies extensively on qualitative information collected from STDF and partner reporting and communications. These included Strategy documents, Guidance and Guidelines, Annual Reports, Project Reports and Evaluations, STDF Evaluations, Knowledge Products, Grant Applications, and Internal and External Communications.

WHO WE TALKED TO

12. A significant portion of the field work for the evaluation consisted of collecting input from a wide variety of stakeholders. Approximately 130 were spoken with over the course of the evaluation. These included donors, founding partners, other partners, implementing partners, developing country experts, diplomatic missions, representatives of external development and aid-for-trade organizations,

and beneficiaries in developing countries. Interviews were conducted both in person and on-line. In addition, the evaluation team observed the November 2023 Working Group meeting and attended several on-line STDF events.

WHERE WE WENT

13. Field work for the evaluation was conducted in Switzerland, Thailand, Guatemala, El Salvador, Mozambique, and South Africa.

WHAT WE FOUND

14. Detailed findings by evaluation question are included in the main body of the report. The table below summarizes these by the Evaluation Criteria laid out in the Terms of Reference.

Evaluation Criteria	Summary of Findings
Relevance	The STDF¹ remains relevant: the demand for, and need for, support of SPS capacity development continues to grow. Applications for technical assistance demonstrate that developing countries still require support to attain international standards and benefit from a funder of innovative projects. The evaluation identified sufficient evidence to clearly determine that all three of STDF's workstreams have not only remained relevant but are poised to become even more so over the next strategy period. Concerns related to the relevance of the STDF, as expressed by a few partners during previous evaluations of STDF, appear to have been addressed through the latest co-created strategy.
Coherence	STDF's work largely aligns with its partners and with other major SPS and safe trade initiatives. The global platform is strong and holds the capacity to realize significant synergies. While this occurs to some extent, more can be done. Understanding the role of STDF as a 'network of networks' and making better use of, and better serving the sub-networks – geographical and institutional, for example – will support improved value addition, synergies and co-financing.
Efficiency	The STDF model has made efficient use of time and resources to deliver results, even as the global pandemic, 2020-2021, slowed delivery of some key workstream elements. In part, this is because the STDF's governance and operational structures are broadly efficient. All of the 2019 programme evaluation recommendations that were accepted by the WG have been implemented, with the exception of two that are currently mid-implementation. The implementation of the monitoring, evaluation and learning framework was seen as the only area that had not yet been advanced fully in line with the expectations of a few stakeholders who expressed frustration with the challenge of identifying and tracking key performance indicators.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, "STDF" refers to the partnership and fund as a whole, including founding partners, other partners, donors, developing country experts, the Secretariat, and other relevant stakeholders.

<p>Effective-ness</p>	<p>The STDF has met both of its programmatic objectives² by delivering significant and tangible results, across all three work streams³. Key enablers include the network and the role of the developing country experts especially; the ability to pilot and successfully scale up innovative approaches; the capacity to broadcast and promote uptake of knowledge products; and the established programme management capacity to support and oversee the delivery of a sizeable portfolio of technically challenging projects across the world.</p> <p>The barriers to achieving the objectives relate to the financial scale of STDF, the demand-driven nature of project development that limits STDF to responding to requests, and the capacity of STDF to deliver outreach. While the COVID-19 pandemic introduced significant disruption and delivery risk to all of STDF's key operations, these were managed diligently, though project delivery and engagement with developing country experts were still affected.</p> <p>While substantial work has been done to design and implement the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework, there remains more to be done. The STDF has thus far been only partially successful in measuring its progress, with an important recommendation from the 2019 evaluation not yet fully implemented. Correspondingly, while the roll-out of the new Communications Plan has been well received, STDF has yet to commence regular reporting of performance metrics.</p>
<p>Impact</p>	<p>STDF has increased SPS capacity in developing countries as measured through contributions to legislation, strategies, structures and/or processes relating to SPS, and improved implementation of trade-focused measures for enforcement of food safety, plant and animal health. The target countries and sectors that have benefitted from STDF support have seen stronger export growth in plants, animals and foods than their comparators. Project level data suggests that STDF support established new markets and that improved capacities helped ensure that trade was conducted safely. Stakeholders also report that SPS management capacity increased. This has resulted in improved food security through reduced food safety contaminants or other food safety issues, and/or improved animal and plant health capacity that can also contribute to food security, increased food access, and reduced waste. The evidence of STDF projects contributing to poverty reduction was more mixed.</p> <p>The Gender Assessment & Action Plan have been highly influential in helping develop the collective understanding of the role that gender has in the SPS domain. However, the implementation is only currently underway. The effort to mainstream environmental</p>

² These are described in the STDF Strategy 2020-2024 as, Outcome 1: "More synergies and collaboration driving catalytic SPS improvements in developing countries; Outcome 2: "Greater access to, and use of, good practices and knowledge products at global, regional and national level.

³ STDF defines its three workstreams as: the global platform, knowledge work, and project and project preparation grants.

	considerations through the STDF has made some progress, with a note on recommendations to strengthen the mainstreaming of environment and climate change in SPS work generated. This work, however, has yet to be substantively commenced.
Sustain-ability	<p>Centering STDF’s strategy around safe trade and aligning with the SDGs has helped put sustainability at the core of STDF’s work. Mainstreaming and prioritizing these issues as central considerations for projects has significantly contributed to the achievement of sustainability. The results emerging from knowledge work and fostering the network have been sustained, as STDF has been able to continue to support successful workstreams. At project level, there is some concern about the ability of some projects to sustain achieved results following the close of the projects. STDF will continue to be constrained by generic development challenges, such as lack of ownership by partner institutions or changing staff.</p> <p>More could be done by the STDF membership, particularly by donors and partners, to promote and disseminate STDF knowledge and better align with lessons arising from STDF projects. This includes more attention to, and promotion of, STDF by senior leadership in partner institutions.</p>
Other	<p>Stakeholders, overall, are highly satisfied with the progress and performance of STDF, especially given the challenges faced during the strategy period. A key opportunity for strengthening the existing partnership would be through expanding the network. While the ability to fund and deliver projects is central to STDF, its core comparative advantages are its ability to act as an ‘honest broker’ in creating knowledge products and forging partnerships through the STDF’s expanding membership. One key avenue is recognizing the potential for STDF to act as a “network of networks” where it can produce high value knowledge products and materials that can then be transmitted through regional or thematic sub-networks. Ensuring that the Secretariat has sufficient resources to execute these workstreams is a central requirement for the model to operate at its maximal potential. Encouraging further co-financing as well as public-private-partnerships may also increase the potential for project delivery. Similarly, the role of the developing country experts, including after their term with the STDF, may provide further opportunities for expanding the partnership’s reach and footprint.</p>

OUR CONCLUSIONS

15. The evaluation was able to identify sufficient evidence to support the claim that STDF is contributing to increased SPS capacity across developing countries. This is seen in contributions to legislation and policy, the growing capacity to effectively conduct SPS services, the strong demand for STDF support, the transfer of knowledge work into project work, and based on the assessment of knowledgeable stakeholders representing a cross-section of SPS institutions in both development and developing country circumstances.

16. Further, this growing capacity appears to be contributing to improved safe-trade conditions, which are observed through survey work conducted by the United Nations⁴, the reduction in global notifications aimed at developing countries and the growth in global exports in food, animal, and plant products from developing countries.
17. The on-the-ground project impact evaluation work conducted for this evaluation, included beneficiary outreach which highlighted the transmission mechanisms to the higher goals of poverty reduction⁵ and food security. This includes limited evidence that domestic value chains were benefiting from STDF capacity enhancement interventions and improving the quality and safety of food products for national consumption, in addition to export-market consumers.⁶
18. Given the STDF's nature as a global platform, the COVID-19 pandemic introduced significant disruption and delivery risk across STDF's key operations. The Secretariat was able to manage these risks diligently and in a timely manner, ensuring that disruption remained contained. Regardless, project delivery and engagement with developing country experts were nevertheless affected during the pandemic, with both implementation of projects and overall spending slowing across the period. However, the new tools and ways of working established by the STDF and the Secretariat in response to the pandemic enabled STDF to "catch up" to plan and are potential major drivers of future performance. The pandemic experience also demonstrated that flexibility around the global platform and online meeting approaches is highly effective.
19. In aggregate, during the current period, STDF has demonstrated its ability to convene and connect diverse stakeholders, deliver demand-driven activities, and learn from and disseminate results. These attributes have allowed the partnership to catalyze and influence change. The partnership has successfully grown its scale to just under USD 7 million per year across the strategy period, driving increases in project spending, stronger and more effective Secretariat support, and investments in monitoring and evaluation and knowledge work that are expected to bear fruit in the coming period. At the same time, WG networking, including on-line forums like the newly created practitioner groups, have succeeded in mobilizing a relatively large number of participants from STDF Working Group members, organizations implementing STDF projects, and other organizations involved in SPS capacity development.
20. However, the partnership is not without its limitations. These include, limitations in capacity to conduct outreach and distribute knowledge products and challenges in measuring and reporting on progress.

⁴ UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation.

⁵ The evaluation sought to identify impacts of improved SPS capacity on income and well-being with limited success, due to the limited ability to collect national data on incomes for specific sectors and the overall time it takes to transmit improved trade conditions to income change.

⁶ Note that the main objective of STDF's projects is to facilitate safe trade, in either or both export and domestic markets, and therefore effects on domestic markets would be indirect or spillovers and are not measured by projects.

WHAT WE ARE RECOMMENDING

21. While the STDF is performing well, has largely met its goals, and can demonstrate effective and efficient delivery, the twentieth anniversary of the STDF is an opportune moment to think about the established ways of working and considering if changes may help improve on delivery of value addition. To that end, the evaluation team presents six strategic recommendations. These recommendations were either co-created with, or presented to and considered by, the Working Group and are listed in order of priority.

1. As a component of the development of the next strategy, engage the partnership in a moderated discussion about the mandate of the STDF and whether or not to widen the scope of STDF's work to "SPS+".

STDF was founded to address barriers to trade and standards, including SPS and technical barriers to trade (TBT), but has primarily focused on SPS capacity development since inception. The twentieth anniversary of STDF and the need to design the next strategy are an opportune moment to consider whether it is time to expand STDF's mandate to also address non-SPS issues which may be critical for market access. As emphasized by stakeholders and observed in the project evaluations, exporters and traders tend to look at trade requirements for their agri-food products as a whole and from their perspective, improving SPS compliance without addressing other barriers is insufficient to create market access and further safe trade.

To that end, we recommend that the WG engage in an open discussion about STDF's mandate, widening the scope of its areas of investment, areas of knowledge work, and eligible project criteria for future PG applications, to include issues of *quality* in addition to *safety*, and make a recommendation to the Policy Committee (PC). This might include projects that are designed to address TBT requirements, market intelligence, trade facilitation, or other areas of investment that are *complimentary* to a primary SPS issue. We are not recommending the PC make specific changes, but rather that there be a full discussion of the positive and negative consequences of doing so as a platform for considering the future direction of STDF. We believe having an open discussion on this issue will benefit STDF and help clarify the shared vision of STDF's role, even if changes to the mandate are ultimately rejected.

In particular, potential new categories of eligibility might include:

- TBT issues that relate to specific SPS capacity shortfalls or issues.
- Infrastructure that supports improved SPS capacities and/or strengthens food safety systems.
- Investments that cross trade facilitation, SPS and TBT needs.

2. Increase the impact of the global platform by strengthening, expanding and servicing the partnership further

The STDF operational rules emphasize the role of the founding partners and traditional organizational hierarchy, whereas many new partners would be designated observers or "other".

The evaluation highlights that success is being driven by being in the “room” together, and engaging on an even level with like-minded organizations that have the will and capacity to tackle real SPS problems.

We therefore recommend that the PC consider:

- Changing the operational rules to reflect the *de facto* practice and simplify the categories of membership to “founding partners” and “other partners” (which would include donors, other international/regional organizations, private sector bodies, etc.)
- Conducting outreach to private sector representative organizations, regional development banks, and regional SPS organizations to participate as other partners
- Expanding and funding the sub-network model and productizing support (practitioner groups, regional groups, etc.)
- Advocate for inclusion of STDF on International Standard Setting Bodies standing agendas.

Of note, though we are recommending the PC consider simplifying the categories of membership, we are not recommending that the PC be reformed or altered, or that the role of donors in guiding the STDF change from the current system.

3. Improve co-financing of project activities via a strategy-wide target for project finance leverage.

STDF has been successful at leveraging external finance for projects with over 30% of project funds in this strategy period coming from a mix of financial and in-kind external contributions, inclusive of mandatory matching per STDF operational rules.⁷ Growing this will increase both leverage and ownership of SPS capacity value additions.

The PC should therefore consider:

- Working toward a strategy-wide target for leverage, including a specific financial leverage target that can be considered during PG application discussions. For example, this can include complementary investments in food safety infrastructure that directly support or supplement capacities to be added by the proposed PGs.
- Piloting an agreed-upon target during the current strategy period, and based on the results, setting a target for future strategy periods, and, potentially, including that target in a revision of the operational rules.
- Further exploring the legal and technical barriers to allowing private sector participation in co-financing projects.

⁷ STDF projects (ongoing or approved since 2020) have mobilized on average an additional 32% of the STDF financial contribution as external contributions to projects. This includes financing (USD17,022,781), as well as budgeted in-kind contributions (USD53,041,125).

- Setting an ambitious but realistic target for the PPG to external finance pipeline and allowing for consideration of leveraged projects outside of the financial scope of STDF contributions.
- Exploring the potential for more shared or jointly funded and developed knowledge products with institutional and/or private sector partners.

4. STDF should consider improving its results-based management culture to match growth in scale.

In response to the 2019 evaluation recommendations, STDF and the STDF Secretariat have put substantial time and investment into strengthening the MEL system. Despite this, monitoring, in particular, is not yet meeting the needs of a few donors or supporting results-based management. The STDF MEL Framework sets out very clearly the importance and value of rolling out a results-based management system for the partnership. The partnership should review what are the objectives of the results-based management system.

Therefore, STDF should consider embedding monitoring data into decision making⁸ by ensuring there is clarity on what information is needed when and where, with a clear path to obtaining it. Doing this may require:

- Reviewing and revising the logframe to ensure it meets results-based management needs
- Establishing baselines and targets for each logframe metric as a component of the new strategy development
- Ensuring logframe metrics are operationally sound & report on them on agreed intervals via LogAlto.
- Including nested indicators for tracking the project portfolio at programme level (e.g. “% of projects that achieve outcome-level results within 1 year of completion”)
- Including logframe metrics *and targets* in Annual Reporting.
- Mapping donor reporting needs to ensure that regular M&E and reporting processes provide all necessary outputs without any supplementary reporting requirements

5. STDF should consider strengthening the role of the Developing Country Expert and finding avenues for post-role engagement.

In the context of STDF’s 20th year, STDF should re-consider the role of DCEs, how they are identified and recruited and how they are engaged with over the long term.

STDF is investing in the capacity of its DCEs and then benefiting from that capacity for two years with limited follow-on engagement thereafter. Former DCEs represent a significant available and largely willing resource that is going under-utilized.

Therefore, the PC should examine ways to improve partnership with DCEs while also capitalizing on a network-strengthening opportunity to improve regional engagement by:

⁸ Management decision making may include recommendations on PPGs and PGs, project management, knowledge work dissemination, and other outreach efforts, among others.

- Converting the DCE role from individual to institutional, recruiting DCEs via nomination by Regional Economic Communities, Development Banks and other multi-lateral entities with specific focuses in trade or SPS.
- Extending the period of DCE participation to three years.
- Continue to give priority when recruiting and vetting DCEs to technical knowledge and experience (among other criteria).
- Working to develop an *alumni* role with more limited (once yearly) engagement at the regional level.
- Support former DCE's to engage on PG and PPG proposal development. Including with limited financial and/or non-financial support.

6. The Policy Committee should add either one additional Secretariat staff member OR support a secondment programme to supplement the existing capacity of the Secretariat.

An important finding of the network analysis is the central role played by the Secretariat in the operationalization of the partnership. The analysis indicates that the capacity of the Secretariat will continue to be a constraining factor as the partnership grows and expands and as the needs and interests of the partners increase and diverge.

The 2019 Evaluation recommended adding two staff positions (MEL and Communications) and seven secondment positions to the existing Secretariat. Two staff positions were added but the secondment programme was rejected. The Secretariat is at current workload capacity to the point that the WG had to defer some knowledge work during the current period to accommodate other priorities. If accepted, this evaluation is recommending further MEL, more systematic facilitation of sub-regional groups sub-regional groups, and DCE support work to the existing workload. The Secretariat is unlikely to be able to accommodate the additional burden without further staff resource.

To ensure a more reliable resource to deploy knowledge work and global platform activities, and to accommodate the WG priorities and the evaluation recommendations, either an additional programme officer position, a secondment position rotating between the Founding Partners⁹, or any other mechanism for adding to Secretariat capacity that is agreeable to the PC will be necessary.

⁹ Excluding WTO, who already fund one staff position.

1. PURPOSE & CONTEXT OF THE EVALUATION

22. This evaluation of the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) was organized by, and contracted through, the World Trade Organization (WTO). It covers STDF operations from 2020 to present and is intended to provide accountability and lesson-learning as the STDF begins planning for its next strategy. The evaluation was conducted by Project Economics Consulting (PEC), and the evaluation team included two senior evaluators (Roxane Burstow and Liz Turner) and an evaluation lead (Neil Pogorelsky) and deputy lead (Petteri Lammi).
23. The main phase of the evaluation was conducted between 15 October, 2023 and 31 March, 2024, with inception activities taking place in September, 2023 and report drafting and review occurring from 31 March until the end of May, 2024. Field work was conducted in Geneva, Thailand, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mozambique and South Africa, as well as electronically.
24. While the evaluation does examine and consider the performance of the STDF Secretariat, the primary focus is on the STDF as a whole, inclusive of all the members and member organizations of the Working Group.

1.1 SUMMARY OF THE STDF AND MID-TERM PLAN

25. STDF is organized with an overall aim to drive catalytic SPS improvements in developing countries and facilitate safe trade, that contributes to sustainable economic growth, poverty reduction and food security.¹⁰ The approach to achieving this vision rests on two outcome pillars: (1) More synergies and collaboration driving catalytic Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) improvements in developing countries, and (2) Greater access to, and use of, good practices and knowledge products at global, regional and national level. The current strategy notes that, STDF's potential contributions to the overall goal and purpose are heavily shaped by many factors, economic and other, beyond the influence of this partnership.
26. The mandate of the STDF covers the following overarching themes:
- Increase awareness, mobilize resources, strengthen collaboration, identify and disseminate good practice in SPS capacity building;
 - Provide support and funding for the development and implementation of projects in developing countries that promote compliance with international SPS requirements; and
 - Identify and strengthen cooperation between governments, international organizations, and the private sector, coordinating efforts to improve SPS compliance and facilitate trade.
27. The main areas in which STDF provides support include a broad range of Aid-for-Trade objectives, including projects supporting capacity building, collaboration and standards implementation. The

¹⁰ Safe trade means trade that is in line with the WTO SPS Agreement, which sets out the basic rules for food safety and animal and plant health standards and requires regulations to be based on science.

activities of the STDF are organized under the three strategic streams of work – (1) the Global Platform, (2) Knowledge Work, and (3) Project and Project Preparation Grants. Workstream 1 allows STDF to support collaborative sharing of information, facilitate dialogue across the public and private sectors and influence global uptake of good SPS practice via STDF’s convening power. Workstream 2 builds and disseminates SPS knowledge and practice, cutting across STDF’s areas of concern in plant and animal health, and food safety for STDF members and wide variety of other stakeholders, including in the private sector. Workstream 3, Project and Project Preparation Grants (PGs and PPGs) forms grants that assist beneficiaries in addressing specific SPS needs. These support recipients in improving their capacity to analyze and implement international SPS requirements, pilot and initiate projects, innovate, and influence and catalyze SPS improvements more widely at the national, regional and global levels in order to improve their ability to engage in safe trade.

1.1.1 STDF STRATEGY 2020-2024

28. The current Strategy 2020-2024, developed on the heels of the 2019 Evaluation report, laid out the plan for STDF across its three workstreams: (1) Project and Project Preparation Grants, (2) Knowledge Work, and (3) The Global Platform. It lays out the context of the strategy and how it aligns to the UN’s 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.
29. The Strategy focuses on two key outcomes:
 1. More synergies and collaboration driving catalytic SPS improvements in developing countries, and
 2. Greater access to, and use of, good practices and knowledge products at global, regional and national level.
30. These outcomes contribute to a goal of increased and sustainable SPS capacity in developing countries and a vision of Sustainable economic growth, poverty reduction and food security. Of note, the strategy emphasizes that STDF’s activities are *demand-driven*, work across *global, regional, and national levels*, and are *collaborative and innovative*. The strategy focuses on a few key areas of development: (1) increasing and expanding access to STDF’s knowledge work, (2) promoting synergies across STDFs projects and knowledge work, (3) growing the ability to leverage financing in support of SPS capacity development, and (4) strengthening the operational capacity of the STDF and STDF Secretariat.
31. In support of these results, the strategy describes some key areas of improvement planned for the period:
 - Improvement of the Monitoring & Evaluation Framework
 - Development of a new Communications Plan
 - Growing contributions to USD 7 million per year

1.2 OBJECTIVES & SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

32. The STDF Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) framework notes that:

External evaluations of STDF projects and the entire programme have been a cornerstone of STDF M&E efforts under previous strategies and will continue to be important under this MEL Framework. The purpose of evaluation will be to assess the overall relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impact of the STDF's workstreams to ensure accountability to donors, and support learning and decisions about what to do next.¹¹

33. STDF, then, sees evaluation as serving a dual purpose: Learning and Accountability, and these are embedded in the evaluation Terms of Reference (TORs) in both the overall goals and in the specific evaluation questions. To this end, the evaluation approach was designed to both measure successes of the current strategy and to elicit lessons that can support STDF in the delivery of effective outcomes for the next strategy.

34. The four primary objectives of this evaluation are outlined in the TORs. These are:

1. Identify and compile evidence of the plausible and distinct contribution that the STDF makes to increased and sustainable SPS capacity in developing countries, and the facilitation of safe trade, as well as higher-level results linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in the period 2020 –2024
2. Assess how the COVID-19 global pandemic influenced STDF's operations, delivery and results, with a focus on key challenges, flexibility and risk management response and implications for future delivery.
3. Draw out lesson of relevance to STDF's global partnership with a particular focus on the response to the 2019 evaluation and/or linked to the 2020-2024 strategy.
4. Identify strategic opportunities and recommendations to strengthen STDF's global partnership, delivery and results, taking into account STDF's mandate, the demand for STDF support, the stakeholders and governance arrangements, options for the STDF's global partnership to leverage finance for development, including private sector financing, to facilitate safe trade, and the global context.

2. EVALUATION METHOD AND APPROACH

35. The evaluation approach is rigorous and tested and includes a structured, transparent and verifiable system for answering the evaluation questions, reporting and synthesizing findings, drawing well-founded conclusions, and producing solid and useful recommendations. The methodology includes (1) **Partnership Assessment** (PA) based on a tailored *IDRC organizational assessment* and elements of *network analysis* (2) **Results Analysis** (RA) that includes an assessment of the entire 2020-2024

¹¹ STDF MEL Framework, 2020, page 21

portfolio results across all workstreams using theory-based *contribution analysis* with elements of *outcome identification* and *context analysis*, and (3) three **Project-Level Impact Evaluations** (PIEs) also based on contribution analysis, outcome identification and context analysis.

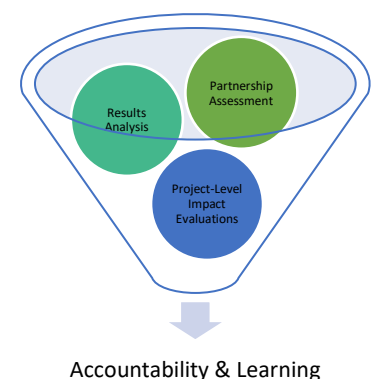
36. The approach conforms with the terms of reference, employs mixed-methods, is cross-methodology supporting, and has allowed the evaluation to both compile evidence of results for the purpose of accountability, as well as support lesson-generation to support the learning mission of the evaluation.
37. The primary tools of the evaluation are:
 1. An evaluation matrix used to align evidence collecting methodologies with the evaluation questions
 2. STDF documentation review
 3. Semi-structured, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) used across all three evaluation workstreams, and including partners, donors, the STDF Secretariat, external stakeholders, implementing partners and beneficiaries.
 4. A partnership assessment survey and analysis
 5. A stakeholder survey and analysis
 6. A management and staff self-assessment survey and analysis
 7. Two other on-line surveys conducted for project impact evaluation work
 8. STDF monitoring data analysis
 9. External data analysis, including data held by the UN and World Bank.

2.1 EVALUATION WORKSTREAMS

38. The evaluation consists of three key components: the PA the RA, and the PIEs. Collectively these are used to derive the overall evaluation results and recommendations. They all contribute to both the accountability and learning objectives of the evaluation.

2.1.1 PARTNERSHIP ASSESSMENT

39. The PA utilizes document review, KIIs, a survey of STDF stakeholders and another survey of present and past STDF Secretariat staff to support its findings. The two surveys utilized Polinode's survey and network analysis capacities. Polinode is a web-based platform for network analysis and visualization. It has allowed the evaluation team to analyze, and visualize, STDF's social and professional networks or organizational structure. PA supports assessment of several



evaluation questions, but focuses primarily on those that fall under the Relevance and Coherence OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria.

2.1.2 RESULTS ANALYSIS

40. The RA also utilizes document review, KIIs, an additional survey of stakeholders and the results of the PIEs, including field work and two further surveys of implementation partners and beneficiaries. The stakeholder survey was also conducted using Polinode, but was not used to create further network analysis. The partner and beneficiary surveys were conducted using the on-line survey monkey platform and were in English, Portuguese and Spanish. The sample of key Informant interviews included 131 interviewees representing donors, partner agencies, developing country experts, beneficiaries, stakeholders in other development organizations, WTO staff, and the entire Secretariat.
41. In addition to the survey and interview work, the evaluation team also collected data from the UN, OECD, the World Bank and national authorities in order to compile and triangulate evidence of performance. Conclusions are either based on cross-evidence, triangulated data or, where that was not possible, are noted as being based on a single source of information. Of note, stakeholders are not cited by name, as a guarantee of anonymity was made to encourage candid responses.

2.1.3 PROJECT IMPACT EVALUATIONS

42. In alignment with the terms of reference, three PIEs were undertaken¹². These were intended to both serve as stand-alone assessments of individual projects, but also to provide evidence to support the overall evaluation of partnership and performance. For the PIEs, field work was undertaken in Latin America, Southeast Asia and Southern Africa. This included meeting with implementing partners, beneficiaries and other stakeholders. Two web-based surveys were undertaken. The PIEs are also supported using document review and global data collected under the RA. PIEs were sampled from the nineteen projects completed in the current period. A consultative process was followed during and beyond inception to identify the sample.

TABLE 1: PIE SAMPLE

PG Code	Project Name	Location	Sector
567	Establishment and maintenance of fruit production areas free and under low prevalence of fruit fly pests ("FFFZ")	Mozambique & South Africa	Plant health

¹² These were selected from 19 in-scope projects.

432	Promoting IT solutions for surveillance and pest reporting ("P-Tracker")	Southeast Asia	Plant health
495	Accreditation of diagnostic tests for animal diseases ("OIRSA")	Central America	Animal health

2.1.4 DATA LIMITATIONS

43. The primary limitations faced in data collection were:
- A survey response rate under 60%
 - A lag in trade data reporting that allowed for assessment through 2022 only, in most cases
 - Unavailability of cross-national income data by sector
 - Limitations in STDF monitoring and ability to roll up project level data to programmatic indicators
 - A limited number of in-scope STDF projects with ex-post evaluations from which to draw

2.2 EVALUATION GOVERNANCE

44. The evaluation was contracted by, and operated under the rules and requirements of the WTO. The evaluation was also governed by the STDF Monitoring and Evaluation guidelines.

2.2.1 PARTICIPATION

45. While contract management was provided by WTO, and certain guidance and organizational support were given by the STDF Secretariat, the Evaluation Team reported to the Working Group (WG) via an evaluation Steering Group (SG). The SG was comprised of six volunteer members drawn from the WG:

Name	Organization	WG MemberType
Eleonora Dupouy	FAO	Partner
Kateryna Onul	IFC	Partner
Sarah Brunel	IPPC	Partner
Catherine Constant	France Department of Agriculture	Donor
Peter Van Dijk	Netherland Min. of Foreign Affairs	Donor
Mary Grace Rivera-Mandigma	Philippines Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards	Developing Country Expert

46. The SG reviewed reports, the contractually-required progress reports, participated in an on-line sensemaking process to review and comment on draft findings and co-create recommendations, and provided formal and informal guidance on evaluation issues, such as the replacement of one of the originally selected PIE cases.

47. Other WG members participated in a number of other opportunities to guide and support the evaluation, including interviews and other feedback during evaluation planning (inception), review and comment on the Inception Report, participation in an on-line sensemaking process, and review and comment on the Draft version of this Report.

2.2.2 ETHICS

48. The evaluation team was able to work freely and without interference. No conflicts of interest arose during the evaluation process, and, while all evaluation team members were free to express their opinions about the findings, no conflicts of interpretation arose during the assessment process.

3. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS BY EVALUATION CRITERIA

49. This section constitutes the main body of evidence and its analysis. Evaluation results are grouped by OECD evaluation criteria, in alignment with the terms of reference and the evaluation matrix. Under each criteria the conclusions for each evaluation question are first summarized and then supported with the detail collected for the evaluation. Conclusions and recommendations are presented in subsequent sections.

3.1 RELEVANCE

3.1.1 EQ1 HOW RELEVANT IS THE STDF'S GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP, GRANT SUPPORT AND KNOWLEDGE WORK TO THE SPS CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT NEEDS AND PRIORITIES OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IN THE CURRENT GLOBAL CONTEXT?

The demand for SPS capacity development in developing countries is well acknowledged by technical organizations, well demonstrated through applications for technical assistance support and well-articulated through interviews with developing country stakeholders. Countries with low development levels and other special needs generally require more support to attain the necessary global standards and will especially benefit from a funder of innovative projects, such as STDF. Through its new strategy period, STDF's three work streams¹³ will continue to become increasingly relevant to an expanding network of partners.

50. Based on 67 stakeholder survey responses¹⁴, STDF's global partnership, grant support and knowledge work are seen as very relevant (mean 8.4 out of 10) to the development needs and priorities of developing countries by stakeholders. Over half (37/67) of the respondents rated STDF's relevance as

¹³ STDF defines its three workstreams as: the global platform, knowledge work, and project and project preparation grants.

¹⁴ Response rate of 49% (67 of 136) to the Partnership Assessment survey. Note that this was one of four surveys conducted and the overall response rate across all surveys is not represented here.

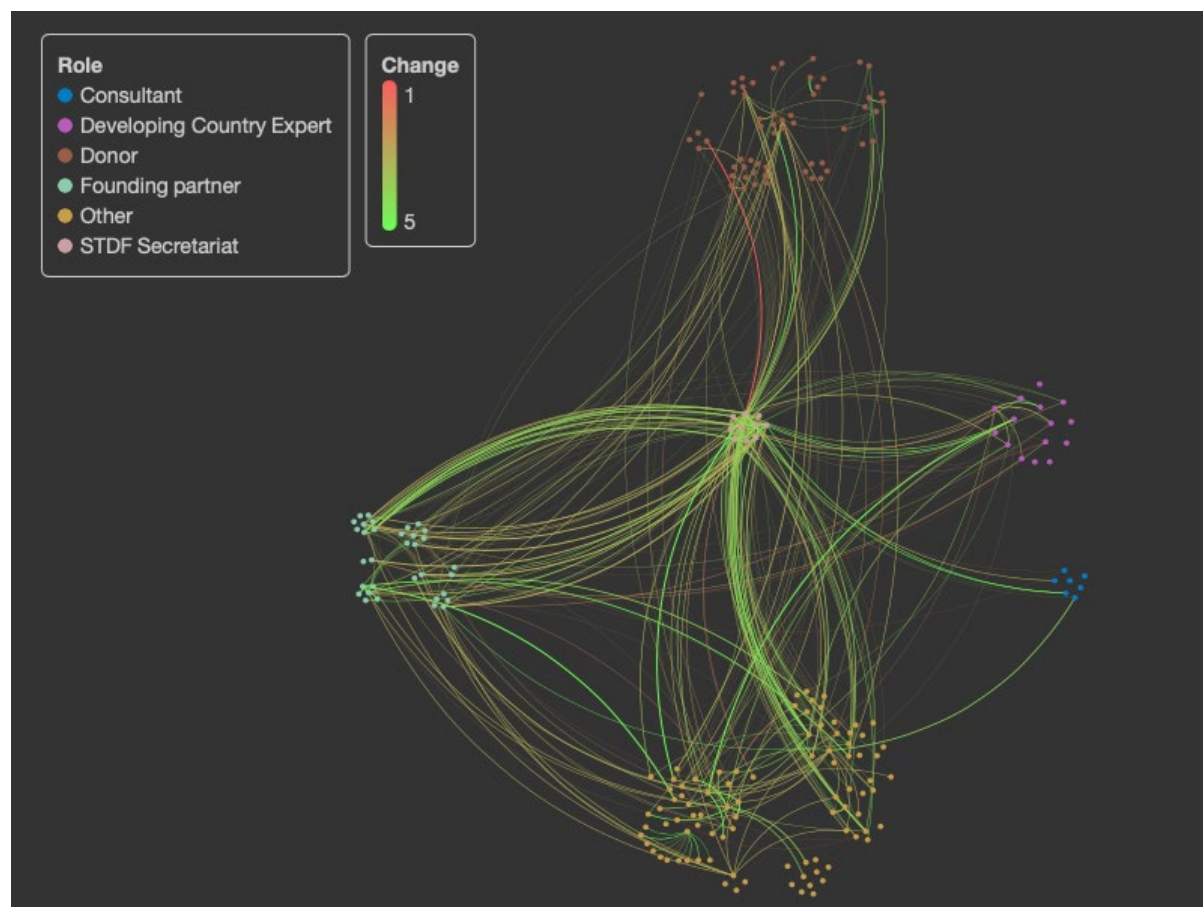
“highly relevant” (9 or 10 out of 10).¹⁵ Generally, all informants interviewed found the STDF to be relevant to their work and spoke about the importance of its three pillars in addressing developing countries capacity development needs and priorities. Most expressed the belief that the STDF would remain and become increasingly relevant to developing country needs over the medium term.

51. There is limited perceivable difference in STDF’s overall relevance between stakeholder survey respondents from developing country partners or other stakeholder groups. Notably, however, the survey responses included only a small number of responses from network members in least developed countries or small island developing states. In interviews, some developing country partners identified the grant support modality as relatively more important, compared to other stakeholders, who generally found the partnership and knowledge work as more important. Crucially, informants from least developing countries also found the support provided by STDF as highly relevant.
52. A depiction of STDF’s entire current network (diagram 1) suggests that the network has strengthened significantly since the start of the strategy period in 2020. This is evident based on the largely green coloring of the connecting lines (edges) in the diagram. This phenomenon is also supported by an analysis of the level of collaboration between different roles. The STDF Secretariat clearly stands out as the key node, connecting many of the other groups.¹⁶

¹⁵ All respondents confirmed in a separate question that STDF is adding value to and aligning with their institutions work and mission with respect to SPS capacity development.

¹⁶ Of the 81 total respondents, 55 indicated an interest in animal health, 77 in food safety and 60 in plant health. This suggests that the network has been able to grow steadily across the three sectors. A more detailed assessment of the network analysis is available in Annex F.

FIGURE 1: WHOLE OF STDF CURRENT NETWORK



Note: includes all nodes and edges, except those related to former STDF Secretariat members. “Change” indicates aggregate response on the level of change between 2020 and present, with 1 = significant decline and 5= significant growth and the thickness of the line the frequency of communication currently.

3.1.2 EQ2 HOW RELEVANT IS THE STDF FOR ITS FOUNDING PARTNERS, DONORS AND OTHER MEMBERS, INCLUDING IN THE CONTEXT OF THE BROADER AID FOR TRADE INITIATIVE AND OTHER LARGE SPS CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES?

Concerns related to the relevance of the STDF, as expressed by a limited number of partners during previous evaluations of STDF, appear to have been largely addressed through the latest co-created strategy.

53. The previous “External Evaluation of the STDF” report from 2019 identified that, while donors saw the STDF as a good, effective mechanism, some founding partners were “not clear how [STDF] fits with their agendas, and their perception [was] that the benefits of investing in STDF are uncertain”. This

resulted in less than full engagement by key partners, significantly weakening the initiative’s potential. Based on the stakeholder interviews and responses to the stakeholder survey, all partner groups now view STDF as relevant. There is a minor gap in the ratings from the founding partners (average score 7.8/10) compared to the donors (8.1). On average, the developing country experts and the “other” group rate the STDF as “highly relevant”, with an average rating of 8.8. Further, several interviewees identified the co-creation of the STDF Strategy 2020-2024 as an important process that bridged the objectives of STDF with their own organizational mandate. This has, to a large extent, addressed the concerns raised in the 2019 evaluation.

3.2 COHERENCE

3.2.1 EQ3. TO WHAT EXTENT DO STDF'S WORKSTREAMS ALIGN, LEVERAGE SYNERGIES AND/OR ADD VALUE TO THE WORK OF STDF PARTNERS, AS WELL AS NATIONAL, BILATERAL, REGIONAL AND/OR GLOBAL INITIATIVES AND INTERVENTIONS TO BUILD SPS CAPACITY AND FACILITATE SAFE TRADE? CAN PROJECTS BE BETTER DESIGNED TO ADD GREATER VALUE AND INCREASE IMPACT?

STDF’s workstreams largely align with the work of its partners and major initiatives that look to build SPS capacity and facilitate safe trade. The potential for the STDF to realize synergies and value-addition are widely accepted, although these have not completely materialized. Projects that have substantive national ownership and buy-in, including through financial commitments, appear to be more successful in delivering value

54. On the whole, respondents to the stakeholder survey indicated strong alignment between their efforts and needs and the work undertaken and/or funded via STDF PGs and PPGs. The blended ranking was 8.1/10, indicating strong sentiment that STDF remains relevant and well-aligned. While the STDF Secretariat shared examples¹⁷ of how STDF projects (and knowledge work) had leveraged, or was leveraged by, other work by members of the STDF partnership, interviewees were generally unable to identify such cases where their work leveraged, or was leveraged by, STDF projects. The general sentiment across KIIIs was that select STDF initiatives (ePhyto, P-IMA for example) highlighted the potential for cross-programme value addition, but that WG members’ capacity limitations to

¹⁷ For instance: STDF regional minor use projects contributed to establishment of Minor Use Foundation; IICA replicated approach of STDF project on virtual food inspection for animal and plant health inspection; STDF e-Phyto project leveraged follow-up work by CABI, World Bank and GATF; STDF biopesticides project in Asia leveraged USDA-supported work on biopesticides in Pakistan and Sri Lanka; regional biopesticides centre of excellence led by USDA and IICA being leveraged under STDF biopesticides project in Latin America; STDF project on PCE facilitators leveraged work by COLEAD and IPPC on collaborative development of an e-learning module as well as translation of IPPC guidance documents produced under the project; recommendations of the Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) carried out by IPPC in Senegal led to STDF project implemented by COLEAD to strengthen the national phytosanitary system.

communicate, both forward and backwards, sometimes made it difficult to track where STDF capacity development efforts were being leveraged. Likewise, another challenge was identifying where STDF grant recipients were utilizing skills and capacities developed through institutional support outside of STDF. Where an effort to trace coherence and relevance has been made, however, such as with the P-IMA evaluation, the value addition proposition is fairly clear and supports the idea that STDF knowledge and grant workstreams, at a minimum, are aligning with partner needs and adding value to partner efforts. Greater attention to STDF at more senior levels within partner institutions may help improve the ability to identify and promote leverage opportunities.

55. Ninety-two percent of stakeholder respondents affirmed the alignment of STDF initiatives with their own institutional efforts to build SPS capacity and facilitate safe trade. Sixty-nine percent of respondents identify “improved SPS capacity” as the number one achievement of STDF since 2020, ranking it 8.4 out of 10 in terms of success. Safe trade received a ranking of 7.8. Evidence from the PIEs indicates that the specific STDF PGs funded were similarly well-aligned. STDF’s mechanism for selecting PGs and PPGs tends to promote such alignment by allowing partners and donors to identify and prioritize areas of alignment. Further, STDF centers SPS capacity and safe trade in its work via its theory of change which carries through design, monitoring and evaluation.
56. STDF lacks comprehensive monitoring of effects that would allow for a clear analysis of variance in the scale of effect between large and small projects. Independent assessment conducted for this evaluation indicates little correlation between project scale and effect, with export volumes, market access change, and other trade effect indicators seeming un- or poorly-related to PG funding size. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that it is not the overall scale of the project, but rather the scale of co-financing of projects that is a more likely indicator of effect and (as discussed later) sustainability of effect. Projects that are funded by multiple donors or, even more encouraging, through matching national grants, tend to secure better political support and prioritization at the national level and generally seem to improve effectiveness of the interventions.
57. Whether or not STDF projects were correctly financially scaled was the most divisive question posed during the KIIs. There is no uniform perspective across stakeholders about project design or scale. There was no clear agreement about adjusting the maximum or average size of PGs or of growing the overall funding envelope. Further, analysis of global data does not indicate a strong correlation between project funding size and impact, with some smaller projects having outsized effects on trade. In general, most respondents felt that the PPG funding limit was still reasonable, though some pointed to a need for inflation adjustment.
58. Respondents did present a variety of opinions on the need to better focus on sectors, though there was not agreement on which sector was underrepresented, and STDF Annual Report data suggests that distribution of investment across all three sectors is reasonable. Two respondents suggested that regional and/or global projects have stronger impact than national projects, but this was not widely held.

3.2.2 EQ4 HOW COULD SUCH SYNERGIES BE INCREASED TO SUPPORT WIDER SCALING UP OF STDF'S KNOWLEDGE AND PROJECT WORK?

Unlocking the potential of STDF's network will play a crucial part in the partnership's ability to foster synergies. This will be assisted by a more mature understanding of the partnership as a 'network of networks' and how STDF can service the sub-networks more effectively over time.

59. STDF's knowledge work is widely seen by stakeholders as valuable and effective.¹⁸ This was also a theme advanced by the 2019 evaluation and continues to be true today. STDF is limited in its ability to create such synergy because it does not develop its own projects, though the PPG process does allow for some development of project synergies. Rather it responds to applications. However, where possible, STDF Secretariat has supported applicants who seek to apply P-IMA and e-certification, for example, at the national level, indicating that synergy is possible. Per the external evaluation of P-IMA (2023), national authorities, including the Belize Agricultural Health Authority and the Bahamas Agricultural Health and Food Safety Authority, have shown interest in applying the P-IMA framework, along with other entities, such as Ghana, Ecuador, and the CARICOM region.¹⁹

60. Since 2020, STDF has improved its communication of knowledge work, which has better positioned STDF to increase synergies with partner programs. The biggest barrier identified by stakeholders to capitalizing on synergies and value-addition has been awareness – both of partner efforts in developing countries and between STDF and partner agencies and countries, many of whom have multiple streams of aid which are often unrelated to, and not aware of, STDF. The evidence suggests that there is scope for improving the communication regarding STDF knowledge products and PG successes within the internal networks of STDF partners, which STDF Secretariat could encourage and support through improved, digestible communications. The Practitioner Groups that STDF established are one example of this. Other interesting examples of facilitating multistakeholder discussions on both the global and regional levels can be found within the STDF network, such as the Global Alliance model at the World Economic Forum²⁰ or the support to National Trade Facilitation Committees provided by the World Bank's Trade Facilitation Support Program²¹ and the WTO's Trade Facilitation Advisory Facility, among others.

61. As identified in the network analysis, the Secretariat plays a central role in the operationalization of the STDF partnership. This will continue to become an increasingly constraining factor, as the partnership continues to expand, and the expectations of the members requirements increase and diverge. In interviews, the Secretariat accept that they have already had to prioritize grant support at the expense

¹⁸ This is evidenced in both the survey results and through key informant interviews.

¹⁹ The P-IMA evaluation identifies cases of use of P-IMA by some organizations (TMA, CABI, Winrock International) on their own initiative, at their own cost

²⁰ E.g. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_The_Power_of_Partnerships_Report_2022.pdf

²¹ E.g. https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/devel_e/a4t_e/chapter_6.pdf

of knowledge work. While the methodology of the network survey was not tailored to identify second order sub-networks, there are indications of local or regional sub-networks developing within the STDF partnership. One of these has formed around the African Union Commission in Africa and another around OIRSA in Latin America. Purposefully fostering the development of local or thematic sub-networks and allowing them to act as extended platforms for content produced by STDF partners could help address some of the barriers to developing synergies between STDF and partner efforts. Survey respondents and key informants indicated potential routes to support such synergies, including, but not limited to, refining the approach to Developing Country Expert (DCE) nomination to better represent regional organizations, better use of DCEs post-WG participation period, and practitioner group focuses at the regional level.²²

3.3 EFFICIENCY

3.3.1 EQ5 TO WHAT EXTENT IS THE STDF MAKING EFFICIENT USE OF TIME AND RESOURCES TO DELIVER ON THE STDF'S OBJECTIVES?

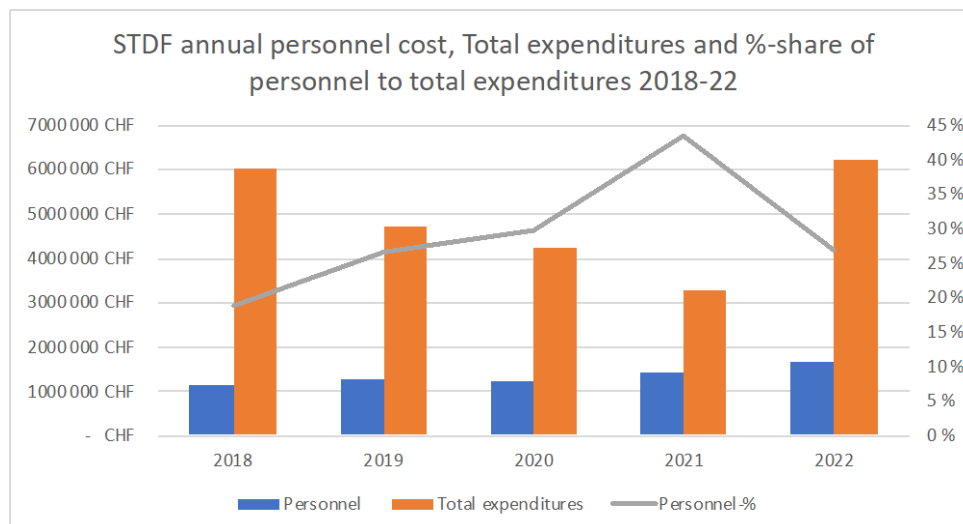
The STDF model has the ability to make efficient use of time and resources to deliver results, as illustrated in its performance in 2022-2023. However, it should be noted that the exceptional circumstances during the COVID-19 pandemic, during the period 2020-2021, affected the STDF's performance significantly, as grant delivery was halted or delayed in many places.

62. A review of the Annual Statements of the STDF for the period 2018-2022 reveals the scale of the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic presented for the effective delivery of global programmes. While interviewees have been highly complementary about how the partnership adapted to the world closing down, Figure 2 illustrates how radically the ability to deliver projects was hindered: over the period of 2018 to 2021, the annual expenditure on non-personnel related costs reduced by 62%, while personnel costs²³ grew by 26% in the same period. As a result of the inability of partners to absorb project grant financing, the proportion of personnel costs to total expenditure increased significantly in the first years of the strategy period.

²² For further information regarding the network analysis and findings, see Annex F. Subnetworks may be leveraged to support STDF through development of project concepts, support of applicants, support of knowledge work development, support of distribution of knowledge work and more.

²³ Based on analysis conducted by the STDF Secretariat

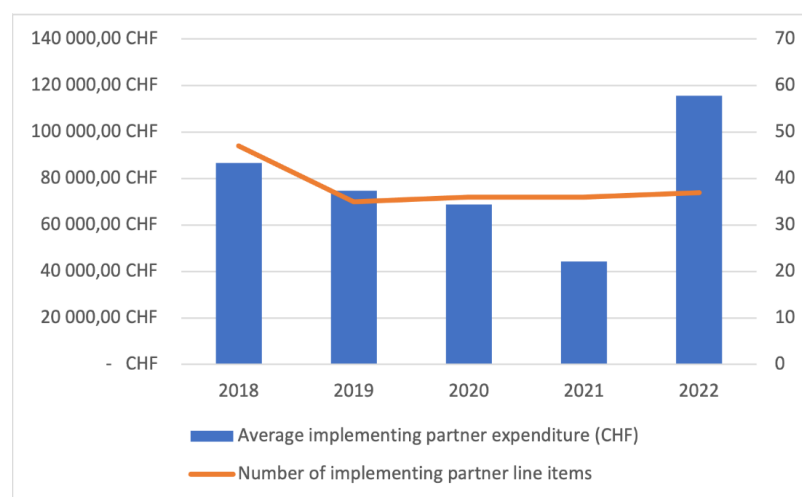
FIGURE 2: STDF ANNUAL PERSONNEL COSTS, TOTAL EXPENDITURES AND %-SHARE OF PERSONNEL TO TOTAL EXPENDITURES 2018-22²⁴



63. Performance in 2022 suggests that the situation has been normalized. STDF has managed to surpass the level of overall annual expenditure achieved in 2018 while reducing the relative proportion of personnel costs to pre-pandemic levels. This seems to be driven primarily by increasing the average annual size of project grants, as illustrated in diagram 3 below. The total number of projects and project preparation grants, as signified by separate accounting codes, has remained within 35-37 from 2019, whereas the average expenditure plummeted by almost 50% from 2018 to 2021, with a 161% increase in 2022.

²⁴ STDF Secretariat analysis of STDF Annual Report Financial Statements

FIGURE 3: AVERAGE ANNUAL IMPLEMENTING PARTNER EXPENDITURE AND VOLUME, IN-SCOPE PGS



64. Based on an analysis of the summary accounts available up to the end of 2023, STDF outperformed all previous years in 2023 in terms of overall expenditure. Data was not available to undertake a comparative analysis of fixed costs to the previous years. Given that the uncontracted grant pipeline consists of large grants, it is likely that the average annual expenditure per project will continue to grow.
65. PPGs are not intended to be a pipeline to STDF projects, and effectiveness objectives suggest that, to some extent, PPGs that result in funding from non-STDF sources may indicate a more effective outcome. However, an assessment of the PPG to PG pipeline does suggest that some efficiencies are being realized by maximizing the quality of applications through financially supported proposals. Ninety-one of 114 completed PPGs have resulted in projects since STDF was founded, of which about 62% were funded by STDF project grants. In the current period, the conversion rate from PPG to funded project has been 80%. Fifty-two percent of PPGs under the current strategy went on to be funded in part or whole by STDF project grants.²⁵ Since inception, 16% of PPGs have not been approved for STDF funding. The overall conversion rate indicates that STDF is successfully navigating the narrow space between innovation and feasible projects. Since inception, the Working Group recommended that 22% of all projects developed through PPGs should seek external funding, suggesting that the PPGs could serve a broader development purpose than simply creating a pipeline of STDF projects.

²⁵ In the current period, 23 PPGs have been completed, of which five were not intended to produce project proposals (these include feasibility studies, prioritization and needs assessment exercises, etc.). Of the remaining 18, three are still pending WG review in June of 2024. Of the 15 that have already been reviewed by the WG, 12 received STDF PG support, two are seeking external funding, and one was not approved.

3.3.2 EQ6 HOW EFFICIENT ARE THE STDF'S GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONAL STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES?

Based on both partner and STDF Secretariat staff feedback, the STDF's governance and operational structures are broadly efficient. The operational rules and practices were seen to provide the necessary framework to operate the partnership.

66. Stakeholder survey respondents found that, on average, investing their organization's time and resources into the STDF's operations was efficient (7.8/10). The most positive ratings were given by the "Other" group (8.4), whereas donors rated the operations as moderately efficient (7.2). Founding partners and developing country experts rated engaging with STDF operations at 7.5 and 7.8, respectively. Based on responses to an organizational self-assessment questionnaire by current and former STDF Secretariat staff members, the organizational structures are in good order (see Figure 5 below – more details available in Annex F). Governance was rated very highly (4.6/5), while responses relating to the operational model were slightly more mixed (4.2). The highest ratings (4.6) were given to strategic leadership; financial management; and inter-organizational linkages. In open responses, the vision and capability of the Secretariat's leadership as well as the richness of the network were highlighted as important factors in the partnership's success.

FIGURE 4: SUMMARY OF STDF SECRETARIAT STAFF ORGANIZATIONAL SELF-ASSESSMENT



67. There was no more than a single response for each dimension of the self-assessment framework, where a staff member disagreed with the statement that the dimension was supportive of STDF's strategic results. Still, the analysis did highlight some areas of relative weakness. The lowest ranked areas are career management and growth and HR-related planning.

3.3.3 EQ7: HOW HAVE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PROGRAMME EVALUATION IN 2019 BEEN IMPLEMENTED?

All of the 2019 programme evaluation recommendations that were accepted by the WG have been implemented, with the exception of two that are currently mid-implementation. The implementation of the monitoring and evaluation framework was seen as the only area that had not been advanced in line with the expectations of a few stakeholders who expressed frustration with the challenge of identifying and tracking key performance indicators.

68. While implementation of all 2019 evaluation recommendations is not yet complete, all recommendations that were accepted by the PC have been started. The following two recommendations are still in process of being implemented:
- Updating the monitoring system
 - Strengthening accessibility of STDF's knowledge platform
69. Both of these recommendations have been taken up. The monitoring system has been updated through the development of a programmatic theory of change²⁶ and developing of a MEL framework. Based on these, STDF has set up a monitoring platform (LogAlto was selected via competitive procurement), and implementation is still on-going. The knowledge platform was also strengthened, and at the direction of the WG, a new website to improve accessibility is being developed, though this is not yet implemented.
70. Another recommendation regarding STDF staffing has been implemented to the extent agreed-upon by the PC and possible within WTO's working rules, but not to the extent envisioned in the 2019 Evaluation Report.
71. Of note, only a few of the KII respondents felt that implementation of the recommendations of the 2019 Evaluation had not met expectations – a small number of donors, specifically, felt that the implementation of the monitoring and evaluation framework had thus far failed to live up completely to both the intentions of the recommendation and to their specific needs as funders. This is further discussed in Section 3.4.2.
72. One of the recommendations arising from the 2019 evaluation that was only “partially accepted” by the Policy Committee was, “Increase participation by developing countries at Working Group level for

²⁶ See Section 3.4.3 for further discussion of the Theory of Change.

better developing country context and potential for knowledge multipliers with Regional Economic Community SPS Unit membership.” Per the implementation plan, Policy Committee members declined to fund participation of Regional Economic Communities in the WG. While it is wholly at the Policy Committee’s discretion to prioritize spending, a number of issues arising from this evaluation (distribution of knowledge products, cross-leveraging STDF and partner programs, improved uptake of developing country knowledge and experience) might be well addressed by this recommendation and it therefore remains relevant.

3.4 EFFECTIVENESS

3.4.1 EQ8. HOW WELL DID THE STDF ADAPT ITS OPERATIONS AND DELIVERY TO THE CHALLENGES CAUSED BY THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC, AND TO WHAT EXTENT HAS RISK MANAGEMENT BEEN APPROPRIATE AND EFFECTIVE ACROSS ALL STDF WORKSTREAMS?

Given the STDF’s nature as a global platform, the COVID-19 pandemic introduced significant disruption and delivery risk to all of STDF’s key operations. The Secretariat was able to manage these risks diligently and in a timely manner, ensuring that disruption remained contained. Regardless, project delivery and engagement with developing country experts were nevertheless affected during the pandemic.

73. By and large, the STDF adapted remarkably well to the challenges presented by the pandemic. Among other responses, the STDF:
- Moved its Global Platform fully on-line.
 - Refocused its knowledge dissemination efforts to virtual and on-line mechanisms
 - Adapted and re-focused PG delivery and delivery schedules, including by supporting the re-purposing of STDF-funded capacities to directly support pandemic alleviation.²⁷
74. Key informants were broadly positive about how STDF adapted to the pandemic. They widely felt that the way in which the platform moved to on-line engagement was as effective as was possible, given the situation, and in some ways improved engagement. The Secretariat was cited as managing communications particularly effectively. The series of Risk Management Reports indicate diligent and timely consideration, and strong mitigation, of key risks, with the majority of active projects (83%) proactively developing updated risk mitigation plans and slightly fewer (78%) revising their implementation workplans.
75. However, the evaluation did note a few areas of concern arising from stakeholder feedback and from the financial results. Online participation in the global platform was particularly challenging for those

²⁷ See for example, re-purposing of laboratory testing capacity in the OIRSA project in LAC which was used to test for COVID during the pandemic (See Annex B).

who had no prior experience of STDF – this includes new representatives from existing donors and partners, but more importantly, developing country experts. Developing country experts are already challenged by the platform framework due to the challenge of understanding the platform and their role in a new space. While the Secretariat was cited as managing a relatively effective on-boarding process, this was hampered by the physical distance which forces participants to rely on language skills beyond what is necessary for direct, in-person engagement. To address this issue, STDF agreed to extend the term of the pandemic cohort of developing country experts by one year. This was a reasonable response that partially addressed the challenge presented by the pandemic.

76. A second issue arising from the pandemic was slowed implementation of projects. This is observable in the slowed project spending during the period 2020-2021 (see Figure 4). STDF worked to manage the risk of slowed implementation through extensions, direct engagement with implementing partners via the Secretariat, and has largely seen a rebound of implementation. However, there is a further risk of slowed implementation that political will may decrease, especially where political priorities change increasingly over time. This was observed in the Project Impact Evaluation for PG495, where turn-over in political leadership eroded support for the delayed implementation of increased lab capacity, jeopardizing on-going funding of accreditation maintenance. It will be important for STDF to continue to manage this type of risk.

3.4.2 EQ9. HOW EFFECTIVE IS THE STDF IN: (I) ACHIEVING AND MEASURING RESULTS UNDER THE STRATEGY FOR 2020-2024, BASED ON THE MEL FRAMEWORK; AND (II) COMMUNICATING RESULTS BASED ON THE COMMUNICATIONS PLAN?

The STDF has delivered significant and tangible results during the current strategy phase, across all three work streams through, for example, increasing SPS capacities in projects; knowledge work on issues such as Good Regulatory Practices (GRPs); and strengthening intra-institutional networks on SPS capacity development. The STDF has not been as successful in measuring its progress, with an important recommendation from the 2019 evaluation not yet fully implemented. Correspondingly, while the roll-out of the new Communications Plan has been well received, STDF has yet to commence regular reporting of performance metrics.

77. STDF has been successful in achieving its results. The 2019 Evaluation noted that “the STDF and the STDF Secretariat have delivered outputs and results beyond what might be expected given their budget and resources.” This continues to be the case across its workstreams. Its project work, which is often the headline result pointed to by stakeholders, continue to be highly effective and includes projects with global reach such as the ePhyto project. Sixty-nine percent of respondents to the stakeholder survey indicated that increased SPS capacity was the most significant result achieved during the period of performance, and ranked capacity development in developing countries as the most significant success along with sustainable economic growth. Key informants most frequently pointed to ePhyto as

the most significant success, indicating that its benefits to capacity, safe trade, and market access far exceeded STDFs monetary contribution.

78. However, STDF's results extend well beyond project grants and project preparation grants. Knowledge work, particularly on Good Regulatory Practices (GRPs) and P-IMA were frequently cited by stakeholders as significant advances in the field of SPS capacity development. The P-IMA evaluation noted challenges implementing P-IMA outside of STDF PGs, but there has been progress. GRP uptake is also highly promising. Further, the global platform has been successful at maintaining and strengthening intra-institutional relationships around SPS capacity development, even through the period of uncertainty brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. While 69% of stakeholder survey respondents felt there is room to further strengthen and expand the existing partnership, all interviewed stakeholders cited the global platform as crucial to STDF's success during the current strategy.
79. STDF is somewhat less successful at measuring its successes. It must be noted that significant advances have taken place since 2019. STDF has developed a monitoring, evaluation and learning strategy, and the Secretariat has put significant time and resource into its implementation. The Secretariat has published evaluation and reporting guidance. LogAlto was selected as a monitoring data platform and implementation has started. Ex-post evaluations of PGs have increased in number and quality. These are all key successes that respond in significant ways to the recommendations of the 2019 evaluation. Nonetheless, there are significant improvements that can still be made. The communications plan indicates intention to report uptake of STDF knowledge products and project support as evidence to be collected under Outcome 2. While STDF maintains a logframe which includes performance metrics, this is not currently reflected on LogAlto, is reported on in annexes that are separate from the Annual Reviews, and what is collected tends to lag performance significantly.²⁸ The 2022 Annual Report does note the intention to map project metrics to programmatic results, allowing for improved roll-up of performance data. This is not yet implemented in a way that can be reviewed at this time. Completing this work should be a priority for STDF in the short term and integrating it into the Annual Review reporting process should be a priority for the mid-term.

²⁸ Currently, all programme level indicators are defined on LogAlto and the system is setup to aggregate project level results to programme level indicators. The challenge at present is that the information reported by some implementing organizations is not meeting the STDF standards. In many cases, it is limited in terms of quantitative data. Implementing partners are not always timely in providing monitoring data.

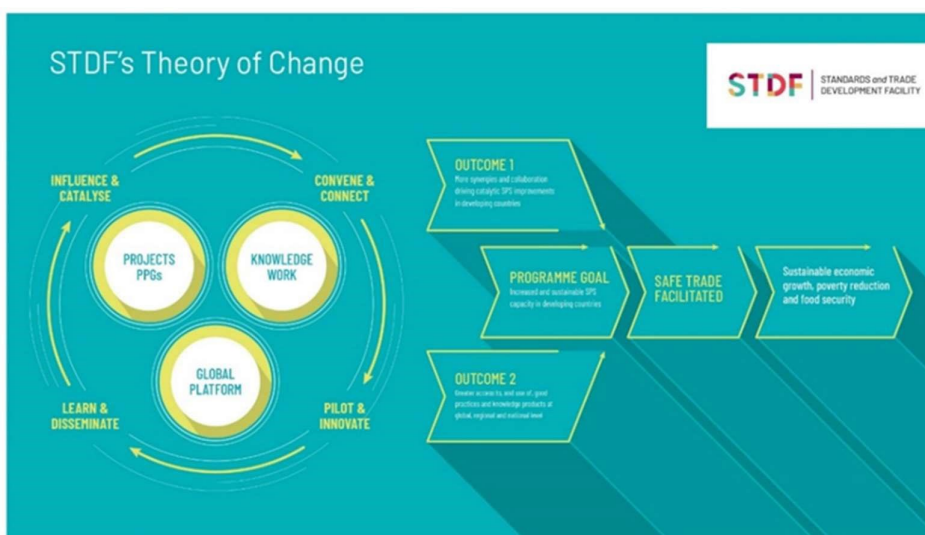
3.4.3 EQ10. WHAT FACTORS HAVE INFLUENCED THE ACHIEVEMENT OR NON-ACHIEVEMENT OF THE STDF PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES?

STDF has delivered on both of its programmatic objectives²⁹ through the four mechanisms set out in the strategy. Key enablers include the network and the role of the developing country experts especially; the ability to pilot and successfully scale up innovative approaches; the capacity to broadcast and promote uptake of knowledge products; and the established programme management capacity to support and oversee the delivery of a sizeable portfolio of technically challenging projects across the world. The barriers to achieving the programmatic objectives relate to the scale of STDF, the demand-driven nature of project development, and the capacity of STDF to deliver outreach.

80. The mid-term strategy articulates two programmatic objectives:
- More synergies and collaboration driving catalytic SPS improvements in developing countries, and
 - Greater access to, and use of, good practices and knowledge products at global, regional and national level
81. At a macro level, there is clear evidence that both of these objectives have been achieved. The catalyzing of SPS capacity is evidenced via STDF's ability to invest in innovative projects that have attracted external funding to support improved reach and uptake (and ownership). Among other indicators, STDF has encouraged good practices globally via it's GRP knowledge work and the evidence of uptake is good.
82. STDF's Theory of Change (TOC), as articulated in the current strategy, describes four mechanisms through which this would occur:
1. Convening and connecting diverse stakeholders with a role in SPS capacity development,
 2. Delivering demand-driven activities to pilot and innovate,
 3. Learning from and disseminating the results and experiences, and
 4. Catalyzing and influencing change that drives sustainable SPS improvements in developing and least developed countries.
83. The TOC then provides a high-level map of how these mechanisms transmit to higher level results, building up from outcomes, to the programme goal and on to facilitated safe trade and then sustainable economic growth, poverty reduction and food security. The TOC has proven to remain relevant throughout the current period.

²⁹ The programmatic objectives are described in the STDF Strategy 2020-2024 as, Outcome 1: "More synergies and collaboration driving catalytic SPS improvements in developing countries; Outcome 2: "Greater access to, and use of, good practices and knowledge products at global, regional and national level.

FIGURE 5: STDF THEORY OF CHANGE



84. As described in the table below, there is evidence that each of these mechanisms has been successfully applied during the course of the strategy.

TABLE 2: SAMPLE EVIDENCE OF SUCCESSFUL APPLICATION OF THE ANTICIPATED STRATEGY'S MECHANISMS

Mechanism	Sample Evidence
Convening and connecting diverse stakeholders	Stakeholders rank STDF “highly relevant” to their organizational missions, value the network connections available, and see the network development as the second most significant success of STDF in the current period. The DCE programme has attracted members from every region and DCEs are highly positive about the benefit of STDF to their regions, countries and their own professional development.
Delivering demand-driven activities to pilot and innovate	Stakeholders indicate that STDF has further improved in terms of prioritizing innovation in PG and PPG selection. Projects funded under the current strategy have included several pilots, including the ePhytosanitary Certificate system which has expanded to a successful global initiative that is now being replicated for eVeterinary Certificates under another STDF pilot project in LAC.
Learning from and disseminating the results and experiences	STDF has improved and expanded its development and dissemination of knowledge products and these have been taken up as projects in several cases, including P-IMA and GRP efforts. GRP has also been broadly promoted through in-person and on-line events in which STDF Secretariat has participated. STDF reports almost 50,000 downloads of knowledge products between 2020 and 2022.
Catalyzing and influencing change that drives sustainable SPS	Beyond the innovative projects described above, STDF reports 19 projects presented evidence of adaptation, replication, or scaling of STDF-funded capacities through 2022. A few stakeholders also noted that STDF’s work on

**improvements in
developing and LDCs.**

Gender had reframed the way they viewed the role of gender in SPS across their own work.

85. STDF is small, representing a fraction of global SPS capacity development delivery, less than 1% of total SPS development assistance. STDF has been successful at sustaining and even growing its scale across the duration of the current strategy, reaching about US\$ 7 million in annual donations.³⁰ Stakeholders expressed mixed opinions on whether or not STDF could grow further. There is also some uncertainty about the willingness of WTO to support a more sizable fund, though current leadership appears to support a strengthened fund.
86. STDF has always recognized that it is demand-driven. That is, projects are selected based on applications, such that STDF cannot generate innovative projects, it can only select the most innovative from amongst the project applications received. STDF has centered, during the current period, supporting and encouraging potentially innovative project applications and the WG has prioritized funding these.³¹
87. The final challenge is likely to be the one where STDF can do the most to improve going forward: outreach delivery. STDF's strategy prioritizes development, delivery and distribution of knowledge products. The development and delivery of these has been relatively successful during the current period. But uptake is limited by the reliance on the Secretariat for outreach and distribution. One clear result of this evaluation is the recognition that STDF is not only the Secretariat – it is the members of the WG including the founders, donors, partners and DCEs. These are largely unified in appreciating the value of the STDF but most WG members indicate that they have limited time and capacity to focus on and promote STDF. Many make significant efforts and this cannot be under-valued. But more could be done, including internal networking within their home organizations to promote knowledge products, advocating for use of these in their home organization development assistance delivery, coordinating conferences and presentations with STDF, and internal and external distribution of knowledge products. At the same time, the Secretariat is stretched fairly thin, even despite the staff additions that have occurred during the current period. The internal capacity limits of the Secretariat make it challenging to capitalize on every opportunity to network and promote knowledge products, among other things.

3.5 IMPACT

88. The STDF theory of change builds up to impact from two outcome pillars: (1) More synergies and collaboration driving catalytic SPS improvements in developing countries, and (2) Greater access to, and use of, good practices and knowledge products at global, regional and national level. STDF then

³⁰ The STDF raised US\$9.7 million in 2023. This potentially points to trust of donors and the possibility for some further modest growth.

³¹ There is sometimes a tension between innovation and needs in developing countries (especially LDCs), where even basic capacity needs to be developed. Innovation is therefore highly context-specific.

expects increased and sustainable SPS capacity development to lead to (and be observable through) increased facilitation of safe trade.

3.5.1 EQ11. WHAT RESULTS HAS THE STDF'S GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP ACHIEVED AT THE LEVEL OF THE PROGRAMME GOAL?

STDF has increased SPS capacity in developing countries as measured through contributions to legislation, strategies, structures and/or processes relating to SPS and evidence of improved implementation of trade-focused measures for enforcement of food safety, plant and animal health. Field work from the PIEs has also identified that this been the case in these three projects, where the LAC and Southern Africa projects were seen to create genuine new SPS capacity and result in knowledge, skills and processes that improved the quality of targeted animal and agricultural goods. In the SE Asia project, pest reporting capacities were further improved, with new capacity created in some participating countries.

89. Of the 19 projects completed during the current strategy, only one has undergone an ex-post evaluation to date.³² That project, the ePhyto Solution (PG/504) implemented by IPPC, showed significant added, sustainable SPS capacity across a large swath of developing countries. Other impacts identified included cost and time to trade savings and improved trade safety in the form of fraud reduction. Further unanticipated impacts included added SPS capacities in the form of improved record keeping, traceability and compliance requirement identification.
90. In addition to the one ex-post evaluation, other ex-post evaluations delivered during the current period include Rolling Out Phytosanitary Measures to Expand Market Access in the Southern Cone Plant Health Committee Region (PG/502) Training of phytosanitary capacity evaluation (PCE) facilitators (PG/401), and Regional feed and food safety programme in Latin America (PG/345). All three were judged to have delivered significant added capacity, including two which delivered spill-over effects to domestic production and food security.
91. Monitoring data indicates STDF is making progress on delivering sustainable SPS capacity. STDF monitors its progress against the logframe, including impact indicators. As of writing, this data is available through end 2022. It shows growing progress in added SPS capacity as measured via contribution to legislation, strategies, structures and/or processes relating to SPS and evidence of improved implementation of trade-focused measures for enforcement of food safety and plant and animal health.

³² Due to the pandemic, the number of projects completed in 2020 (3) and 2021 (1) declined dramatically. Coupled with difficulty to travel, the WG decided to put ex-post evaluations on hold. Subsequently, discussions within the WG about which projects to select for ex post evaluations led to a decision to include three PIEs as part of this Programme Evaluation.

TABLE 3: MONITORING DATA ON INCREASED & SUSTAINABLE SPS CAPACITY DELIVERY

Result	Programme (STDF) level indicators	Data source	Freq- uency	2020 Results	2021 Results	2022 Results	2023 Results	Assumptions
Programme Goal: Increased and sustainable SPS capacity in developing countries	# of STDF initiatives and PPGs/PGs contributing to changes in SPS legislation, regulation, policies, strategies, structures and/or processes, including attention to cross-cutting issues (climate change, environment, gender, inclusion)	Self assessment survey of PGs/PPGs	Annual	6	7	8	9	STDF initiatives are relevant to country needs, based on demand and developed in alignment with principles of SPS Agreement and international (Codex, OIE, IPPC) standards
	Evidence of improved implementation and/or enforcement of food safety, animal and/or plant health measures for trade, with attention to climate change, environment, gender and inclusion	Related quantitative and qualitative data gathered via interviews or administrative data of SPS agencies. Reports of capacity evaluation tools. Reports of WBG "Enabling the business of agriculture" (https://eba.worldbank.org/), UNIDO Trade Standards Compliance Report and online tool on rejection data, etc.	Bi-annual	13	9	11	10	Countries align their national regulations with international (Codex, IPPC, OIE) standards

92. External data also points to growing SPS capacity amongst developing country authorities. The evaluation team examined World Customs Organization Performance Measurement Mechanism data³³, UNCTAD TRAINS data on SPS non-tariff measures³⁴, SPS notifications promulgated via WTO's ePing system³⁵ and the UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation³⁶. Two primary trends indicate that during the current strategy, capacity amongst competent authorities in developing countries have grown. While no one data source pointed cleanly to demonstrable change (or lack of change) in global SPS capacity for developing countries, the balance of data strongly suggests progress is being made. WTO's notification system shows a growth in capacity of developing countries to issue notifications while the notifications received by developing countries are declining over the same period.³⁷ The UN survey data shows growth in Agricultural facilitation capacity across developing countries. And the UNCTAD data shows that for those developing countries reporting into this new

³³ <https://pmm.wcoomd.org/>

³⁴ <https://trainsonline.unctad.org/>

³⁵ <https://eping.wto.org/>

³⁶ <https://www.untfsurvey.org/>

³⁷ Note that the STDF Secretariat believe this is likely attributable to WTO Technical Assistance. However, in combination with the other indicators described, to the evaluation team it also suggests growing SPS capacity.

system, SPS measures implemented are rising. Taken together, these suggest that developing countries, including least developed countries, are demonstrating growing capacity and use of global SPS management systems.

93. STDF has begun, during the current strategy, to track non-compliance alerts from the European Union for PG countries as an indicator of change in SPS capacity. The limited data collected to-date shows a fall by 20% in alerts during the current period. However, data for 2023 is not yet collected and information collected for PIE countries for this evaluation indicate that that figure may grow when additional data is collected.
94. Stakeholder feedback from developing country participants in STDF project grants indicate that developing country stakeholders value the added capacity engendered by STDF investments. Two surveys conducted for the evaluation, one in LAC and one in Mozambique and South Africa, indicated that stakeholders valued the investments, believed they created genuine new SPS capacity and resulted in knowledge, skills and processes that improved the quality of targeted animal and agricultural goods. However, in both cases, some concerns about the sustainability of these capacities were expressed.³⁸ This was also observed in Southeast Asia where pest reporting capacities developed under the P-track project decreased over time after project completion as access to, and use of, the software that was developed and deployed under the project, declined.

3.5.2 EQ12. HOW HAS THE PARTNERSHIP CONTRIBUTED TO THE FACILITATION OF SAFE TRADE, SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH, POVERTY REDUCTION AND FOOD SECURITY?

The target countries and sectors that have benefitted from STDF support have seen significantly stronger export growth in plants, animals and foods than their comparators. This effect was also visible in Least Developed Countries (LDCs), although less pronounced. While our analysis does not allow to establish causation across the project portfolio, project level data suggests that support established new markets, improved capacities ensured that trade was conducted safely. Stakeholders also report that increased SPS management capacity results in improved food security through access to safer or pest-free foods. There is evidence of overall growth in trade in food, plant and animal goods, that when married with evidence in a decline in notifications to developing countries suggests a contribution to growth in safe trade. The evidence of STDF projects reducing poverty was more mixed.

95. To assess the progress made during the current strategy toward contributing to growth in safe trade, the evaluation team collected and assessed trade data in plant, animal and food trade from 2019 to 2022 from the UN Comtrade database. Between 2019 and 2022 (the most recent date for which trade data is currently available), exports in plants, animals and food grew by 36% across all countries that

³⁸ The survey responses did not provide specific sustainability concerns beyond the typical development challenges of on-going resource requirements, turn-over, and political change.

received STDF support. LDC's that received STDF PGs in the current period grew relevant exports³⁹ by 26% compared to by 23% for all LDCs. Given the scale of STDF, this suggests a significant added trade effect contribution.

96. At the PG level, a number of projects reported or observed export growth. STDF's monitoring data indicate that across PGs, four new export markets were accessed between 2020 and 2022 as a direct result of PG investments. In addition, the evaluation's assessment of trade data indicates that for the three PIE countries alone, both exports and new market growth occurred.

TABLE 4: GROWTH IN TRADE FOR PG-TARGETED COMMODITIES, PIE COUNTRIES, 2019 – 2022, UN COMTRADE

Project	Target Commodities Trade Value Growth	All Commodities Trade Value Growth
Fruit-Fly Free Zones (MOZ and ZA)	88%	38%
P-Tracker (Southeast Asia)	36%	19%
OIRSA Lab Accreditation (LAC)	17.5%	16.7%

97. These results suggest that STDF projects are potentially contributing to SPS capacity growth such that both new markets and safer or pest-free trade with existing markets are growing in excess of the overall market are occurring. The evidence of the link from this to contribution to poverty reduction is weaker.⁴⁰ Stakeholders expressed confidence that food security improved as a result of added SPS capacities. This was specifically referenced in relation to GRPs. Further, farmers in both Thailand and Mozambique indicated that the PGs they participated in improved or preserved livelihoods and access to safer or pest-free foods. But in both cases, this related more to the exportability of the products than domestic or personal consumption. The evidence link to safer value chains for local/domestic consumables is mixed. This is likely because STDF projects target export sectors by design. There may be spill-over capacity enhancements from some projects, but this did not occur in any of the PIEs except to the extent that improved lab capacities in LAC were used to support pandemic response.

3.5.3 EQ13. TO WHAT EXTENT HAVE GENDER AND ENVIRONMENT BEEN MAINSTREAMED IN THE STDF?

While the work on gender mainstreaming was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Gender Action Plan has been highly influential in helping develop the collective understanding of the role that gender has in the SPS domain. However, the implementation is only currently underway. The effort to mainstream environmental considerations through the STDF has made some progress, with a note on

³⁹ Trade in plants, animals, and food.

⁴⁰ Note that the logframe indicators for contribution for poverty reduction are jobs and increased incomes, but the time frame for contribution to change and then measurement of scale of change makes analysis from 2020 to present challenging.

recommendations to strengthen the mainstreaming of environment and climate change in SPS work generated. This work, however, has yet to be substantively commenced.

98. STDF targeted gender mainstreaming as an output of the 2019 evaluation. The recommended Gender Assessment was completed in 2022. The assessment concluded that awareness of gendered SPS impacts was low among STDF members and further that STDF was not sufficiently using its convening power to bring gender considerations into an SPS context. In response, STDF developed a Gender Action Plan (2023). The action plan, which is intended to run through 2025, aims to (1) “Advance and support women’s capacity to meet trade-related sanitary and phytosanitary requirements” and (2) “Promote greater attention to gender mainstreaming in SPS capacity building development work”.
99. As a component of this effort, STDF hosted a launch and a number of on-line events designed to address and rectify misunderstandings and lack of awareness about the role of gender in SPS and SPS capacity development. Feedback from stakeholders in regards to these events was highly positive, with several expressing their own surprise at how much they learned and how their opinions and understandings of the role of gender in SPS capacity development had significantly changed. The Secretariat also hosted online trainings with implementing partners to sensitize them to the Action Plan. Gender assessments at the project level are underway. To this extent, the work to mainstream gender has been effective. However, in other ways, there is still more to be done. Reporting on gender-disaggregated metrics is still either lagging or weak. The logframe now calls for gender disaggregating metric reporting, but the existing reports do not evidence effective disaggregated data collection. Project monitoring reports do now require such reporting and some project gender assessments are done, indicating that gender-disaggregated reporting is likely to follow. This indicates that over the next year, stakeholders can reasonably expect effective aggregation of this PG-level data to STDF-wide reporting. LogAlto is not yet showing aggregated metric reporting, however. So, the next opportunity to observe progress on gender mainstreaming will be the next annual report.
100. Environmental mainstreaming is somewhat different from that of gender in that it has more traditionally been seen to relate to SPS management, and this has increased in general consciousness over the past decade as the role of climate in pests and infections has grown. STDF has, in response, revived its climate knowledge work and is seeking to publicize it during the remainder of the current strategy, and presumably beyond. As with gender, there are environmental indicators in the current logframe. However, these are not yet being reported on in LogAlto.⁴¹
101. As part of the broader effort to better engage the Global Platform between WG meetings, a series of four webinars with speakers from STDF partners and others during climate change week, were held in 2022 and the Secretariat published a briefing note on Climate and SPS risks in 2023 as a follow-up. The note made recommendations to strengthen the mainstreaming of environment and climate change in

⁴¹ Note that LogAlto is set up to report these indicators, but projects are not yet delivering the necessary data to do so.

SPS work, not just for STDF but more broadly. These included recommendations to the international standard setting bodies and improved surveillance and reporting to better manage risk. There was no evidence, however, that further action had been taken as a follow up.

3.5.4 EQ14. WHAT INTENDED AND UNINTENDED IMPACTS LINKED TO STDF'S WORK CAN BE OBSERVED IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES?

STDF tracks several intended impacts across its project portfolio and these are reported annually. The unintended impacts of projects are not tracked in a similarly structured manner and, thus, it is more difficult to report these systematically. However, some stakeholders identified occasions where they were able to link non-STDF-facing elements of their home organizations to STDF knowledge and project work, resulting in at least one unanticipated opportunity to present on GRPs.

102. STDF is monitoring a variety of intended impacts in its PG recipient countries. Across the programme, quantitative metrics have been established at the project level that are intended to roll up to the programme impact contributions.⁴² These include:

TABLE 5: STDF LOGFRAME IMPACT METRICS⁴³

STDF Tracked Impact Metrics	2020-2022 Results
Value of exported goods (for targeted products and in targeted markets)	3 projects showing results (2022 only)
Number of markets accessed	2 projects with new market access
Number of firms with export increases (disaggregated by gender and firm size)	2 (2022 only)
Number of non-compliance alert declines	8
Evidence of market access and trade facilitated (with attention to climate change, environment, gender and inclusion) ⁴⁴	4 (2021 only)
Number of STDF initiatives, including PGs and PPGs, contributing to changes in SPS legislation (with attention to cross-cutting issues)	21
Evidence of improved implementation and enforcement of food safety, animal and/or plant health measures (with attention to cross-cutting issues)	32

⁴² STDF also monitors outcomes and outputs, these represent only impact measures.

⁴³ STDF Annual Reports, 2021, 2022, 2023

⁴⁴ This is described as a quantitative measure in the logframe and on LogAlto.

103. There is no category within the logframe or on LogAlto for unexpected effect monitoring. The templates STDF provides project implementors for progress and end of project reporting in its MEL guidance do include unintended effects in its description of impact measurement. But no further guidance of what these could be is provided, making it unlikely that they could be aggregated and rolled up across projects to create a programmatic measure, beyond a simple count. The annual reports do not speak to unexpected outcomes.
104. STDF has evidenced flexible, adaptive reaction to unexpected effects during the current strategy. As discussed in Section 3.4.1, the major unexpected challenge during the current strategy was the COVID-19 pandemic. STDF managed and generally thrived through this experience. This suggests that the partnership and Secretariat have the structures and capacities in place to manage future unexpected outcomes.
105. Stakeholders identified few unexpected impacts of the global platform. However, a few noted that unanticipated linkages to programs and interventions within their own organizations had helped amplify STDF knowledge and/or project work. This resulted in at least one significant opportunity for a significant joint event with donors and other partners on GRP knowledge work during the current period. Additionally, there have been synergies with UNIDO and Australia⁴⁵ and collaboration with USDA and USAID on GRPs and P-IMA. The opportunity to capitalize on linkages, anticipated or otherwise, was cited as a way to improve the strength of the partnership.

3.6 SUSTAINABILITY

3.6.1 EQ15. TO WHAT EXTENT ARE THE RESULTS ACHIEVED BY THE STDF SUSTAINABLE?

STDF's targeted results largely align with the objectives set out by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially goals 1, 2, 3, 8 & 17. The results emerging from knowledge work and fostering the network have been sustained naturally, as STDF has been able to continue to support successful workstreams. At project level, there is some concern about the ability of projects to sustain achieved results following the close of the projects.

106. Across STDF reporting, including the current strategy document, annual reporting, and monitoring and evaluation work, sustainability is described in various ways. Brought together, it can be interpreted as:
- The ability to maintain and continue to support economic growth, poverty reduction, and food security in a way that is inclusive, environmentally responsible, and meets the needs of present and future generations. This includes promoting safe trade, strengthening SPS capacity, addressing gender equity and environmental sustainability, and leveraging innovative approaches and partnerships.*

⁴⁵ Vienna Food Safety Forum

107. This largely aligns with the definitions used in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which, in turn, take their definition from the Brundtland Commission, as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Under the SDGs, sustainability includes economic, social, and environmental dimensions.⁴⁶ Beyond these, however, STDF has a significant stake in a fourth category of sustainability – that is, the continuing effectiveness of its investments in SPS capacity.
108. Stakeholders interviewed broadly accepted these definitions of sustainability and noted that STDF largely does not have ultimate control over the sustainability of investments beyond the ability to encourage and design to promote sustainable outcomes. This is a key concern of a majority of stakeholders, but one which most indicate is a broader development assistance problem and one that STDF handles no worse than other development efforts. Nonetheless, members ranked sustainability of results highly, at 8.36 out of 10.
109. Environmental sustainability is not generally reported on in STDF’s Annual Reports, though the 2022 report did note the success of its Climate Change Week communications toward promoting mitigation of climate change via safe trade. It also noted the approval of a planned 2023 environmental assessment.
110. The logframe does include a number of indicators that have sustainability dimensions, though, critically, this does not include how well or long investment effects are sustained, which would require long-term, on-going monitoring well beyond the project life cycles.
111. Some stakeholders indicated that project agreements might be better designed to attain improved commitments to sustaining capacity investments. As discussed above, both the OIRSA and P-Tracker projects demonstrated deteriorating usage over time, in part due to a lack of development partner/applicant investment beyond the project lifecycles.

3.6.2 EQ16. WHAT MAJOR FACTORS INFLUENCE THE ACHIEVEMENT OR NON-ACHIEVEMENT OF SUSTAINABILITY, AND HOW CAN SUSTAINABILITY BE ENHANCED?

Centering STDF’s strategy around safe trade and aligning with the SDGs has helped put sustainability at the core of STDF’s work. Mainstreaming and prioritizing these issues as central considerations for projects has significantly contributed to the achievement of sustainability. STDF will be constrained by generic development challenges, such as lack of ownership by partner institutions or changing staff.

112. STDF has mainstreamed and prioritized sustainability in terms of climate change, social sustainability, and gender and inclusion in its investments by including these issues in, among other things, project applications, logframes and other monitoring tools, evaluations, and reporting. According to

⁴⁶ STDF notes in the strategy document that their efforts align to SDGs 5, 10, 12, 14, and 15, all of which reflect elements of sustainability.

stakeholders, centering sustainability in this way has a positive impact of the achievement of sustainability. This is not to suggest that STDF has achieved the maximum level of sustainability achievable. More can always be done. But the transition during the development of the current strategy to a definition of safe trade has helped put sustainability at the center of STDF's work, as has the effort to align to the SDGs.

113. However, and as discussed above, sustainability of results, in terms of durable capacity enhancements, is a continuing challenge. This is a broad development support problem, that extends well beyond SPS capacity. But it is a particularly glaring challenge of all capacity development programs, because these often hinge on training or equipping individuals. This is also true for STDF. As is observed in the OIRSA project, even support to build up laboratories can suffer from lack of capacity sustainability as accreditations are allowed to lapse over time or individuals trained in new procedures and equipment leave.
114. Despite the fact that this is a wide-spread and shared challenge, there are probably more things STDF could do to enhance sustainability of capacities delivered. Currently letters of support from national/regional authorities are required as a component of PG applications. STDF could, for example, require memorandums of understanding with applicant governments regarding on-going support as a condition for disbursement.⁴⁷ Monitoring and reporting on longer-term outcomes could also be considered.

3.6.3 EQ17. TO WHAT EXTENT ARE STDF WORKING GROUP MEMBERS AND BENEFICIARY COUNTRIES ENGAGED IN AND CONTRIBUTING TO THE SUSTAINABILITY OF STDF KNOWLEDGE WORK AND PROJECTS, AND WHAT OPPORTUNITIES EXIST TO IMPROVE SUSTAINABILITY?

More could be done by the STDF membership, particularly by donors and partners, to promote and disseminate STDF knowledge and better align with lessons arising from STDF projects. Senior leaders in partner organizations could engage on and promote STDF both within their organizations and externally.

115. As discussed in Section 3.4.3 the burden of distribution of STDF knowledge products and lessons learned from PGs falls disproportionately on the Secretariat. It is the Secretariat's role to promote these, but given the resources available and other management requirements, it is unlikely that more time and effort can reasonably be spent in this area without a major shift in funding or staffing. It is the WG members, and perhaps the beneficiaries themselves, then, that are best positioned to improve sustainability of STDF knowledge and project work.

⁴⁷ The Secretariat notes, however, that additional MoUs (i.e. between implementing organizations and WTO – STDF has no legal personality) would make the work of Secretariat much more complex, involve DGO and WTO legal office on a more frequent basis. This administrative burden would need to be weighed against the potential benefit.

116. Some members recognized, when asked during the KIIs, that more could be done by membership, particularly by donors and partners, to promote and disseminate STDF knowledge and better align with STDF projects. As with the Secretariat, it is important to keep in mind that donor and partner capacity and availability is limited and representatives have many competing priorities. However, there is scope, during the next strategy development phase to consider how STDF might better simplify and package knowledge products for improved distribution, developing training content or packages on the knowledge products aimed at policy makers, and how to align donors and partners around the goal of further uptake.
117. In particular, some respondents noted that senior leadership in partner institutions, including founding partners, rarely engage on STDF issues or promoted STDF internally or externally. This is seen by some members as a lost opportunity to improve the reach of the partnership and the sustainability of STDF knowledge work.

3.7 OTHER

3.7.1 EQ18. TO WHAT EXTENT HAS THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IMPACTED THE PERFORMANCE AND FUTURE-ORIENTATION OF THE STDF?

The COVID-19 pandemic was a major disruption and resulted in the slowed implementation of projects. However, the new tools and ways of working established by the STDF and the Secretariat in response to the pandemic are potential major drivers of future performance. The pandemic experience also demonstrated that flexibility around the global platform and online meeting approaches is highly effective.

118. As discussed in Section 3.4.1, the COVID-19 pandemic presented novel challenges to STDF and exacerbated other existing challenges. STDF largely rose to this challenge and, in some ways, was strengthened by it. Performance wise, the pandemic resulted in slowed implementation and spending on projects and moving projects forward required significant investments of Secretariat time. Implementation has now “caught up” to plan. In the wake of the effort to recover momentum, along with the response to the 2019 Evaluation, STDF and the Secretariat has new tools and capacities that are relevant to future performance. These include improved reporting and performance monitoring tools, improved coaching experience and capacities, and a continued focus on financial tracking and management. Further, the pandemic highlighted the value of collaborative flexibility.
119. Aside from project delivery, the pandemic experience also demonstrated that flexibility around the global platform and online meeting approaches is highly effective. Stakeholders widely reported that STDF’s move to online meetings during the pandemic supported productive discussion and decision making. It also provided a model for the later implementation of practitioner group meetings, which were held electronically and many of which were quite effective. Since the end of the pandemic, STDF

has continued to rely on on-line meeting technologies and management approaches to run effective meetings for the platform and for other communications and group-learning and decision-making activities. This is likely to continue moving forward.

3.7.2 EQ19. HOW CAN THE WORK DELIVERED BY STDF'S GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP BE LEVERAGED AND/OR SCALED UP TO ADD GREATER VALUE AND INCREASE IMPACT?

While the ability to fund and deliver projects is central to STDF, its core comparative advantages are its ability to act as an 'honest broker' in creating knowledge products and forging partnerships through the STDF's expanding membership. Ensuring that the Secretariat has sufficient resources to execute these workstreams is a central requirement for the model to operate at its maximal potential. Encouraging further co-financing as well as public-private-partnerships may also increase the potential for project delivery.

120. The majority of Key Informants believe that the projects are right-sized at the current caps or possibly adjusted for inflation. However, this is not a universal opinion with some advocating for significantly higher project funding caps. Almost all Key Informants believed that the PPG cap was at the correct level. The PIEs highlight the value of additional, co-financing to ensuring project impact. The mechanism of impact transmission is both through added, leveraged scale and through securing the commitment and support of an additional partner or partners.
121. While a few respondents did advocate for larger projects, almost all Key Informants expressed the belief that smaller projects could still carry significant benefits, and that it was less the size of the project and more its level of innovation and the ability to translate its lessons to a broader audience, and then communicate those effectively, that determined the extent to which it would be scaled up or leveraged more broadly. This requires not just good project selection, but communication and distribution that is timely and effective. This suggests that it is the Global Platform workstream that best controls how leverage and scale-up occurs, through its position as a network of networks. Stakeholders see STDF as an “honest broker,” in the SPS space. The value of this position cannot be overstated and should be fostered and protected.
122. The survey results highlight a plurality opinion of WG members that expanding opportunities to incorporate the private sector in, among other things, co-financing projects is the most significant opportunity to strengthen the partnership. Thirty-five percent of respondents cited public-private-partnerships as the most significant opportunity available to STDF. The next most cited option related to more types of SPS capacity (18%).
123. As affirmed in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, Financing for Development (FFD) includes both domestic resource mobilization and private sector partnerships as valid and encouraged mechanisms for leveraging additional resources for development among other sources of innovative finance. STDF has traditionally encouraged applicants, but through application guidance and as a part of PPG

development, to look for co-financing, often in the form of in-kind donation. Of note, during the current strategy, only three PPG recipients have sought external finance in lieu of PG funds. Stakeholders feel that there is space to look for increased leverage, local financial contribution, and, in particular, private sector participation in project finance. Further, they feel, STDF should consider setting co-finance targets for the next strategy. Not, perhaps at the individual PG level, but certainly across all PGs collectively.

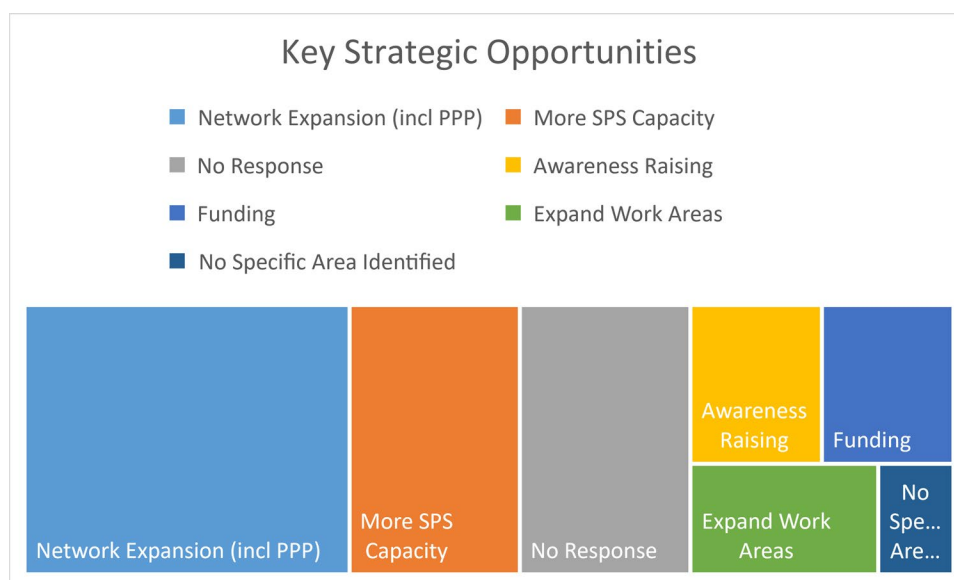
124. As noted under EQ17, several respondents identified lack of engagement on STDF and missed opportunities to promote STDF’s work by senior leadership at partner organizations as a key area of potential scaling/leveraging. This could be achieved via joint promotion of knowledge products, inclusion of STDF on standing agendas, or other joint efforts.

3.7.3 EQ20. WHAT IS THE OVERALL VISION OF STDF PARTNERS, DONORS AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED IN SPS CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING BENEFICIARIES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, FOR THE STDF? WHAT DO THEY SEE AS THE STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES TO ADAPT, STRENGTHEN EXISTING PARTNERSHIPS AND ACCELERATE RESULTS AND IMPACT?

Stakeholders, overall, are highly satisfied with the progress and performance of STDF, especially given the challenges faced during the strategy period. Few stakeholders would profess to having a comprehensive vision for the partnership, which emphasizes the importance of continuing co-creation in strategy development. A key opportunity for strengthening the existing partnership would be through expanding the network.

125. Almost universally, the stakeholders interviewed and surveyed for this evaluation, both WG members and others, feel that STDF is “on the right track”. There is wide appreciation for the progress made since the last evaluation. Stakeholders are widely appreciative of the work undertaken to implement the recommendations of the 2019 evaluation. The most common response to questions about what STDF should do next was “more of the same”. This is not to say there are no improvements to be made. This evaluation has identified a number of ways STDF may choose to consider adjusting its approach. Some of these are advanced as recommendations in Section 5. However, at large, the evaluation has highlighted that STDF is successful, is doing the right things at the right time and that the next strategy is less a time for significant change and more for fine-tuning its approach in select areas of opportunity.
126. As discussed throughout this report, the survey of WG membership conducted for this evaluation identified key areas of opportunity to strengthen the partnership. These were categorized into common areas of response and are described in the figure below.

FIGURE 6 KEY STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP STRENGTHENING OPPORTUNITIES



127. As highlighted in the figure, the most frequent response centered on expanding the current network. Respondents identified a number of ways this might occur, including:

1. Adding members from additional multi-lateral institutions (UN, Regional Banks, OECD)
2. Adding members from regional organizations that work on SPS capacity development and/or regional trade blocks such as the African Continental Free Trade Area
3. Creating more opportunities for participation by the private sector
4. Adding more member countries as donors
5. Intensify cooperation with existing partners, such as the Codex Trust Fund, IPPC Trust Fund, and WOAHA Animal Health and Welfare Trust Fund.
6. Create opportunities for continued participation by former DCEs

128. Select survey responses to the question, “In your opinion, do any strategic opportunities exist to adapt and strengthen the STDF’s partnership for improved results and impacts that are not currently being utilized” are paraphrased below:

BOX 1: SUMMARIZED STAKEHOLDER SURVEY RESPONSES ON OPPORTUNITIES TO STRENGTHEN THE STDF

Strengthened participation in regional platforms esp. those group of countries implementing free trade agreements or economic partnerships to ensure complementarities or synergies with global standards and best practices.

The strategic opportunities lie in One Health approach for dealing with issues that cut across plant, animal and human beings including the ecosystem.

STDF should consider strengthening collaboration with Regional Economic Communities and Continental bodies to effectively align with regional priorities and ensure sustainability of outcomes.

Stronger inclusion of the private sector (also in project proposals) and a match making mechanism to ensure sustainability.

Cooperation with GlobalG.A.P– to take into account increasing requirements by the private sector, certification along the entire chain.

Increased engagement with regional trading blocs or their relevant specialized organizations.

Initiating more systematic follow up support to analytical (P-IMA) work streams at the LDC country level.

In addition to SPS aspects, TBT issues could be highlighted more.

All WG members could do more to work with developing country partners to increase awareness of STDF as a funding mechanism.

Conduct more regional focused on-line discussions.

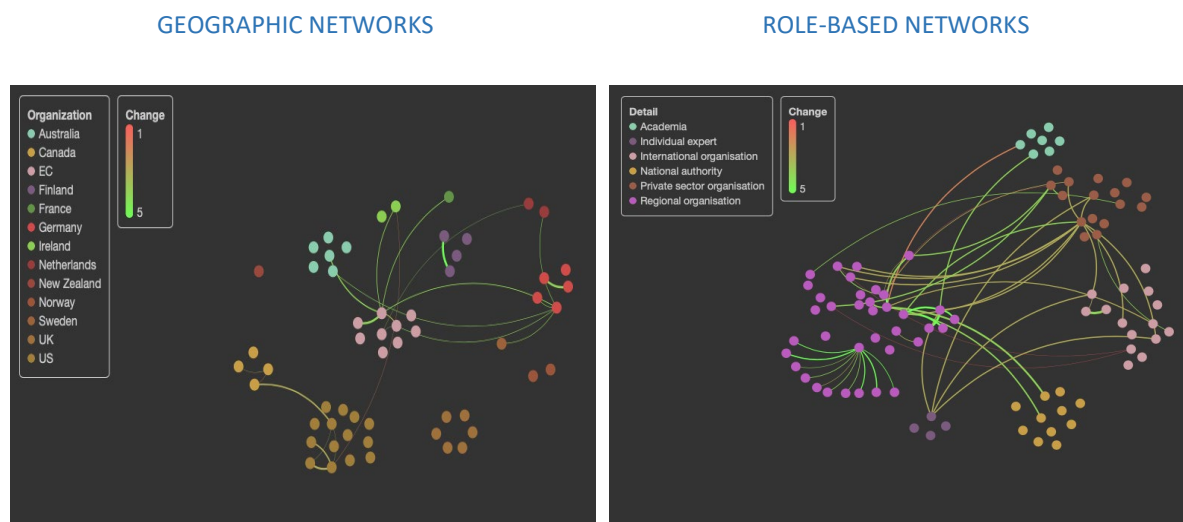
The inclusion of infrastructure in the areas eligible for STDF support

3.7.4 EQ21. WHAT STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES EXIST TO ADAPT AND STRENGTHEN THE STDF'S PARTNERSHIP FOR IMPROVED RESULTS AND IMPACTS?

Given the positive results achieved by the STDF partnership in the strategy period, plenty of opportunities for adaptation and strengthening exist and have been identified by partners and through supplementary analysis by the evaluation team. One key avenue is recognizing the potential for STDF to act as a “network of networks” where it can produce high value knowledge products and materials that can then be transmitted through regional or thematic sub-networks. Similarly, the role of the developing country experts, including after their term with the STDF, may provide further opportunities for expanding the partnership’s reach and footprint.

129. The network analysis conducted for the PA demonstrates the emergence of inter-related sub-networks. These revolve around geography, institution, and role. The potential power of STDF as a “network of networks” can be further capitalized upon as is being done by some non-bilateral development organizations, such as the Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation, headquartered at WEF, but utilizing partner networks to expand their reach. These sub-networks are optimal for amplifying and disseminating STDF’s knowledge work and deepening ties on the ground.

FIGURE 7: STDF SUB-NETWORKS IDENTIFIED IN THE NETWORK ANALYSIS



Note: includes all nodes and edges within the donor and “other” sub-networks. “Change” indicates aggregate response on the level of change between 2020 and present, with 1 = significant decline and 5= significant growth and the thickness of the line the frequency of communication currently.

130. Sixty-eight percent of responding surveyed stakeholders felt there were remaining opportunities to strengthen the STDF partnership. While this is a majority, it is a less clear one than most other questions asked for the evaluation. Area of opportunity described by those believing there were opportunities are described in Box 1, above.
131. Of these suggestions, a number present complexities that may make uptake infeasible in the short or medium term. Key informants, including WTO management staff, noted that STDF is already the second largest fund at WTO and that the capacity of WTO to support significant growth may be quite limited, though leadership have been recently supportive of STDF and other trust funds⁴⁸ and may support further growth. Also, stakeholders noted, expansion of areas of work brings risk of diluting STDF’s focus, which has been a significant avenue of value addition.
132. The areas of opportunity that had the most traction amongst Key Informants were inclusion of the private sector as potential recipients of project funding, as co-financers, and in some role within the WG, and improved linkages with regional organizations.
133. Another area of opportunity that did not arise through the survey, but came up repeatedly in KIIs related to evolving the role of developing country experts. A number of respondents, but certainly not all, felt that the DCE role was overly limited in both time and scope. Some advocated for lengthening

⁴⁸ See, for example, the recent creation of the Fish Fund and related fundraising efforts.

the DCE position to three years to support uptake and integration. Further, some believed that the DCE role could be better regionalized by updating the working rules to require nomination by a designated regional organization of one of the two DCEs from each region. Key informants believed this would improve sustainability of relationships and capacity and ability to reach regional actors.

134. Lastly, several key informants noted that DCEs were a lost resource once their terms were up, and that they could be better capitalized upon to advance SPS capacity development and support applicants in developing viable proposals. As it stands, the continued support and attention of prior DCEs is dependent on their interest and ability to provide ongoing support. There is no formal network or role through which they can be engaged. Some stakeholders suggested a network of former DCEs engaged with annually, and potentially organized into regional networks, could be a way to continue to engage their support and provide improved regional outreach.

4. SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

135. Conclusions by evaluation question are presented in Section 3. The table below presents a high-level summary by evaluation objective.

Conclusions by Evaluation Objective

Compile evidence of STDF's results since 2020 focused on the plausible and distinct contribution that the STDF makes to increased and sustainable SPS capacity in developing countries, and the facilitation of safe trade, as well as higher-level results (including sustainable economic growth, poverty reduction and food security) linked to the Sustainable Development Goals.

The evaluation was able to identify sufficient evidence to support the claim that STDF is contributing to increased SPS capacity across developing countries. This is observed through the growing capacity to effectively conduct SPS regulation, the strong demand for STDF support, the transfer of knowledge work into project work, and the assessment of knowledgeable stakeholders representing a cross-section of SPS institutions in both developed and developing country circumstances.

Further, this growing capacity appears to be contributing to improved safe-trade conditions, which are observed through improved SPS facilitation in the global trade environment, the reductions in targeted SPS non-compliance alerts to STDF support recipients in targeted commodities, the reduction in global notifications aimed at developing countries, and the growth in global exports in food, animal, and plant products from developing countries.

The on-the-ground project impact evaluation work conducted for this evaluation, included beneficiary outreach which highlighted the transmission mechanisms to the higher goals of poverty reduction and food security. This includes limited evidence that domestic value chains were benefiting from STDF capacity enhancement interventions, spurring some investment in strengthening food safety systems, and improving the quality and safety of food products for national consumption, in addition to export-market consumers.

Assess how the COVID-19 global pandemic influenced the operations, delivery and results achieved by STDF's global partnership based on the Strategy for 2020-2024, with attention to the key

challenges faced, STDF's flexibility and risk management response, and any other implications for risk management, delivery and/or performance in the future.

Given the STDF's nature as a global platform, the COVID-19 pandemic introduced significant disruption and delivery risk across STDF's key operations. The Secretariat was able to manage these risks diligently and in a timely manner, ensuring that disruption remained contained. Regardless, project delivery and engagement with developing country experts were nevertheless affected during the pandemic, with both implementation of projects and overall spending slowing across the period. However, the new tools and ways of working established by the STDF and the Secretariat in response to the pandemic enabled STDF to "catch up" to plan and are potential major drivers of future performance. The pandemic experience also demonstrated that flexibility around the global platform and online meeting approaches is highly effective.

Draw lessons about what has worked well (and not well) in the operation of STDF's global partnership, paying particular attention to changes introduced in follow-up to the 2019 evaluation (including on MEL and cross-cutting issues) and/or linked to the 2020-2024 Strategy (e.g. launch of Practitioner Groups, increase in annual target funding level)

In aggregate, during the current period, STDF has demonstrated its ability to convene and connect diverse stakeholders, deliver demand-driven activities, and learn from and disseminate results. These attributes have allowed the partnership to catalyze and influence change. The partnership has successfully grown its scale to just under USD 7 million/year across most of the strategy period (USD 9.7 million in 2023) driving increases in project spending, stronger and more effective Secretariat support, and investments in monitoring and evaluation and knowledge work that are expected to bear fruit in the coming period. At the same time, WG networking, including on-line forums like the newly created practitioner groups have succeeded in mobilizing a relatively large number of participants from STDF Working Group members, organizations implementing STDF projects, and other organizations involved in SPS capacity development.

However, the partnership is not without its limitations. These include, limitations in capacity to conduct outreach and distribute knowledge products and challenges in measuring and reporting on progress.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

136. Recommendations, which are relevant for the forthcoming strategy, have been co-created through a sensemaking process⁴⁹ and are prioritized based on relevance, feasibility, and anticipated impact. In the event that recommendation 6, addition of Secretariat capacity, is not approved, the prioritization of these recommendations should be considered as not all will be supportable without added staff. All recommendations should be considered by the PC and based on its collective assessment, the WG

⁴⁹ Sensemaking occurred on-line on 25 March, 2024 and included all interested and available members of the WG, in addition to members of the Secretariat. It should be noted that the recommendations are the authors' own and not all input from the sensemaking process could be incorporated given diverging opinions.

and/or the Secretariat may be tasked to follow up. Implementation of some recommendations may subsequently require a final decision from the PC, while others may not. Some recommendations may require immediate attention as part of the new strategy development.

#	Recommendation	Timing	Responsibility
1	<p>As a component of the development of the next strategy, engage the partnership in a moderated discussion about the mandate of the STDF and whether or not to widen the scope of STDF’s work to “SPS+”.</p> <p>STDF was founded to address barriers to trade and standards, including SPS and technical barriers to trade (TBT), but has primarily focused on SPS since inception. The twentieth anniversary of STDF and the need to design the next strategy are an opportune moment to consider whether it is time to expand STDF’s mandate to also address non-SPS issues which may be critical for market access. As emphasized by stakeholders and observed in the project evaluations, exporters and traders tend to look at trade requirements for their agri-food products as a whole and from their perspective, improving SPS compliance without addressing other barriers is insufficient to create market access and further safe trade.</p> <p>Of note, and further to this point, the international agreements on trade – the SPS Agreement, the TBT Agreement, and, most recently, the Trade Facilitation Agreement sit in different WTO divisions for historical and administrative reasons.</p> <p>To that end, we recommend that the WG engage in an open discussion about STDF’s mandate, widening the scope of its areas of investment, areas of knowledge work, and eligible project criteria for future PG applications, to include issues of quality in addition to safety, and make a recommendation to the Policy Committee (PC). This might include projects that are also designed to address TBT requirements, market intelligence, trade facilitation, or other areas of investment that are complimentary to a primary SPS issue. We are not recommending the PC make specific changes, but rather that there be a full discussion of the</p>	As a component of Strategy 2024 development	Policy Committee with the Working Group

	<p>positive and negative consequences of doing so as a platform for considering the future direction of STDF.</p> <p>In particular, potential new categories of eligibility might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBT issues that relate to specific SPS capacity shortfalls or issues. • Infrastructure that supports improved SPS capacities and/or strengthens food safety systems. • Investments that cross trade facilitation, SPS and TBT needs. <p>Of note, we believe having an open discussion on this issue will benefit STDF and help clarify the shared vision of STDF's role, even if changes to the mandate are ultimately rejected.</p>		
2	<p>Increase the impact of the global platform by strengthening, expanding and servicing the partnership further</p> <p>The STDF operational rules, originally written twenty years ago, emphasize the role of the founding partners and traditional organizational hierarchy, whereas many new partners would be designated observers or "other".</p> <p>The evaluation highlights that success is being driven by being in the "room" together, and engaging on an even level with like-minded organizations that have the will and capacity to tackle real SPS problems.</p> <p>We therefore recommend that the PC consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change the operational rules to reflect <i>de facto</i> practice and simplify the categories of membership to "founding partners" and "other partners" (which would include donors, other international/regional organizations, private sector bodies, etc.) • Conducting outreach to private sector representative organizations, regional development banks, regional economic communities and regional SPS organizations to participate as partners • Expanding and funding the sub-network model and productize support to practitioner groups, regional 	As a component of Strategy 2024 development	Policy Committee with the Working Group

	<p>groups, etc. Developing country experts with a strong institutional backing could play a role here (see Recommendation 5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for inclusion of STDF on ISSB standing agendas and promotion of STDF project information dissemination by donors and partners with aligned commitments in recipient countries. <p>Of note, though we are recommending the PC consider simplifying the categories of membership, we are not recommending that the PC be reformed or altered, or that the role of donors in guiding the STDF change from the current system.</p>		
3	<p>Improve co-financing of project activities via a strategy-wide target for project finance leverage.</p> <p>STDF has been successful at leveraging external finance for projects with over 30% of project funds in this strategy period coming from both financial support and in-kind external contributions (required under the operational rules).⁵⁰ Improving this will increase both leverage and ownership of SPS capacity value additions.</p> <p>The PC should therefore consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working toward a strategy-wide target for leverage, including a specific financial leverage target that can be considered during PG application discussions. For example, this can include complementary investments in food safety infrastructure that directly support or supplement capacities to be added by the proposed PGs. Piloting an agreed-upon target during the current strategy period, and based on results, setting a target for future strategy periods, including, potentially, including that target in revised operational rules. Financial participation may be sought from applicants, associated or interested governments, other donors, the private sector, or others as appropriate and interested. 	As a component of Strategy 2024 development	Policy Committee with Working Group

⁵⁰ STDF projects (ongoing or approved since 2020) have mobilized on average an additional 32% of the STDF financial contribution as external contributions to projects. This includes financing (USD17,022,781), as well as budgeted in-kind contributions (USD53,041,125).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further exploring the legal and technical barriers to allowing private sector participation in co-financing projects. • Setting an ambitious but realistic target for the PPG to external finance pipeline and allowing for consideration of leveraged projects outside of the financial scope of STDF contributions. • Exploring the potential for more shared or joint development of knowledge products with institutional and/or private sector partners. 		
4	<p>STDF should consider improving its results-based management culture to match growth in scale.</p> <p>In response to the 2019 evaluation recommendations, STDF and the STDF Secretariat have put substantial time and investment into developing and strengthening the MEL Framework. Despite this, monitoring, in particular, is not yet meeting the needs of donors or supporting results-based management.</p> <p>The STDF MEL Framework sets out very clearly the importance and value of rolling out a results-based management system for the partnership. The partnership should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review what the objectives of the results-based management system are, the needs of the different partners (including the donors), and how best to tailor the current system so that it can produce the required results in a more streamlined way. • In the context of STDF's 20th anniversary, revisit the logframe as a component of strategy development and ensure the right things are being measured and targeted • Further embed monitoring data and lesson-learning into management and partnership decision making by ensuring there is clarity on what information is needed, when and where, with a clear path of obtaining it. 	As a component of Strategy 2024 development	Working Group Secretariat

	<p>Doing this may require:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing and revising the logframe to ensure it meets results-based management needs • Establishing baselines and targets for each logframe metric as a component of the new strategy development • Ensuring logframe metrics are operationally sound and report on them on agreed intervals via LogAlto. • Including nested indicators for tracking the project portfolio at programme level (e.g. "% of projects that achieve outcome-level results within 1 year of completion") • Including logframe metrics <i>and targets</i> in Annual Reporting. • Mapping donor reporting needs to ensure that regular M&E and reporting processes provide all necessary outputs without any supplementary reporting requirements 		
5	<p>STDF should consider strengthening the role of the Developing Country Expert and finding avenues for post-role engagement.</p> <p>STDF is investing in the capacity of its DCEs and then benefiting from that capacity for two years with limited follow-on engagement thereafter. Former DCEs represent a significant available and largely willing resource that is going under-utilized.</p> <p>Therefore, the PC should examine ways to improve partnership by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Converting the DCE role from <i>individual</i> to <i>institutional</i>, recruiting DCEs via nomination by Regional Economic Communities, Development Banks and other multi-lateral entities with specific focuses in trade or SPS. • Extending the period of DCE participation to three years. • Continue to give priority when recruiting and vetting DCEs to technical knowledge and experience (among other criteria). 	Medium term	Policy Committee with the Working Group

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working to develop an <i>alumni</i> role with more limited (once yearly) engagement at the regional level. Support former DCE's to engage on PG and PPG proposal development. Including with limited financial and/or non-financial support. 		
6	<p>The Policy Committee should add either one additional Secretariat staff member OR support a secondment programme to supplement the existing capacity of the Secretariat.</p> <p>An important finding of the network analysis is the central role played by the Secretariat in the operationalization of the partnership. The analysis indicates that the capacity of the Secretariat will continue to be a constraining factor as the partnership grows and expands and as the needs and interests of the partners increase and diverge.</p> <p>The 2019 Evaluation recommended adding two staff positions (MEL and Communications) and seven secondment positions to the existing Secretariat. Two staff positions were added but the secondment programme was rejected. The Secretariat is at current workload capacity to the point that the WG had to defer some knowledge work during the current period to accommodate other priorities. If accepted, this evaluation is recommending further MEL, sub-regional group, and DCE support work to the existing workload. The Secretariat is unlikely to be able to accommodate the additional burden without further staff resource.</p> <p>To ensure a more reliable resource to deploy knowledge work and global platform activities, and to accommodate the WG priorities and the evaluation recommendations, either an additional programme officer position, a secondment position rotating between the Founding Partners (other than WTO, who already fund a staff position), or any other mechanism for adding to Secretariat capacity that is agreeable to the Policy Committee will be necessary.</p>	During the next strategy	Policy Committee

ANNEX A: CASE STUDY SUMMARY – PG432, “P-TRACKER”

Project aims and objectives: The project ‘Demonstrating the impact on trade and regional plant protection of streamlined information systems for pest surveillance and reporting’ (p-tracker) was a regional project funded by the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) that aimed to improve the design and implementation of pest surveillance in the Asia-Pacific region, implemented between 2016 and 2023.

The project aimed to tackle the inconsistent approach to pest surveillance and poor standard of pest reporting across the Asia-Pacific region by promoting best practices in surveillance and reporting. This included building capacity to improve pest and disease identification, data collection, management and analysis, and reporting, in line with international standards. The project supported activities in eight countries in the region: Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam.

Partners and beneficiaries: The Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (DAFF) was responsible for overall project management, implementation and coordination of the project from December 2016 to September 2023. The main project partners and beneficiaries were the National Plant Protection Organizations (NPPOs) in the eight countries. The NPPOs are part of agricultural departments or ministries in each government. NPPOs’ broad objectives include: to protect national plant resources through implementing appropriate phytosanitary measures in imports; to facilitate market access and safe international trade in plants and plant products through a robust export certification system; and to reduce risks to national food security and the environment by protecting plant resources.

Evaluation: The project impact evaluation (PIE) included document reviews and interviews. Between November 2023 and February 2024, the project evaluator reviewed documents and data, conducted virtual interviews in all eight countries and undertook field work in Thailand. The project evaluator interviewed 40 people, including staff from participating NPPOs, DAFF and the STDF Secretariat, as well as departments and offices in the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MOAC), private sector beneficiaries, research and extension workers in Thailand.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Relevance: Overall, the project reflected the priorities of the main project beneficiaries, the NPPOs. The NPPOs considered the package of support relevant and appropriate to their surveillance needs. The project implementing partner considered local contexts and processes, tailoring activities to specific needs and circumstances. The project aligned with regional and international surveillance priorities and commitments related to maintaining and/or gaining market access and trade.

Coherence: There were several examples of complementarities between, or with other projects. The project complemented initiatives by STDF partners and donors, including other initiatives funded and implemented by Australia. However, opportunities for complementarities were not fully capitalized on. In some of the countries, the project led to subsequent projects and activities and continued use of the same or similar technology. However, more could have been done to leverage other activities and financial support.

Efficiency: The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the project, leading to a delay of nearly 3 years and an under-spend. Overall, apart from the delay and resulting extensions due to COVID-19, the project was efficient, delivering activities in a timely and cost-effective way. It was also flexible enough to adapt to changes in circumstances, such as the pandemic. There were some administrative challenges delaying payments. Moreover, staff turnover during the project contributed to delays.

Effectiveness: Overall, the project has helped all NPPOs to improve their surveillance capacity, systems, data collection and reporting. However, limited progress was made in reporting data to international information systems. The main challenge highlighted by all NPPOs was the cost of the software license, some operational problems with the technology, COVID-19 travel restrictions, and inadequate staff capacity and/or high staff turnover. In addition, the quality of the M&E data, reporting and evaluative work was variable and often quite poor.

Impact: Overall, the project contributed to all countries gaining and/or maintaining market access. In some cases, this took place after the project ended. Information on non-compliance notifications (rejections) is patchy across countries. Gender and environment were not adequately integrated into the project. The project only reported on representation of women in the management of the project and participation of women in project activities. There were some examples of positive outcomes related to the environment.

Sustainability: Most NPPOs used either p-tracker or alternative surveillance apps to conduct surveillance after the project ended, expanding its use to new commodities and pests. Some countries developed their own apps, motivated by the positive results using p-tracker. For those using p-tracker, an ongoing challenge is the software license cost and, more importantly, the recent discontinuation of the software. The lack of operational alternatives for some of the countries curtails the sustainability of the benefits of the project. Most NPPOs have been able to sustain the capacity building results by passing on expertise to colleagues.

LESSONS LEARNED

Importance of ensuring M&E requirements are fully understood by the implementing partner (DAFF) and the NPPOs, and that guidance and support are provided to ensure outcome/impact data is collected, including baseline data.

Some of the technological challenges highlight the importance of selecting technology relevant to the context.

Ensuring sustainability plans are in place earlier and communicated and understood by all stakeholders.

Importance of sharing innovations (e.g. use of alternative free software apps in some countries) and actively supporting countries to replicate and roll out similar.

The proliferation of mobile app technologies and examples of NPPOs using more than one app for surveillance purposes poses risks to efficiency and highlights the need to rationalize the use of multiple information platforms.

The p-tracker project demonstrated that close cooperation between the implementing partner and beneficiaries are important elements for successful implementation. It also demonstrated the usefulness of establishing a network for sharing experience, knowledge, expertise, lessons, problems and trouble-shooting between participants.

Limited appetite for virtual mentoring suggests the importance and need for in-person engagement and/or improved design of virtual components, and also highlighted language barriers and connectivity issues.

Close alignment with country priorities was important in ensuring active participation and that objectives were met.

Since capacity levels differed significantly across countries, the amount of support should reflect the different levels of need in each country, contributing to 'levelling the playing field'.

Reluctance to share information on pests and plant diseases via IPPC is likely to persist given many countries are reluctant to share given the potential negative impact on a country's exports.

RECOMMENDATIONS

a. **Project-specific:**

- i. Follow up with all NPPOs to ensure they are aware of the status of the p-tracker software (responsibility: DAFF).
- ii. Organize virtual training on alternative software for all NPPOs, including PNG who can demonstrate how to use it successfully (responsibility: DAFF).
- iii. Support the establishment of a community of best practice across NPPOs, based on progress made during the project, to ensure sharing continues (responsibility: DAFF).

b. STDF program:

- i. Regularly check that partners are using STDF's guidance on MEL and check the quality of monitoring data frequently, and put in place remedial measures when needed (responsibility: STDF).
- ii. Ensure implementing partners and commissioned evaluators follow the guidance on end of project evaluations (responsibility: STDF).
- iii. Ensure all projects have a sustainability plan in place demonstrating how projects will continue and leverage activities in future (responsibility: STDF).

ANNEX B: CASE STUDY SUMMARY – PG495, “OIRSA”

Project aims and objectives: The project ‘STDF/PG/495 Regional Project for Accreditation of Tests in Animal Health Diagnostic Laboratories’ was a regional project funded by the Standards Trade and Development Facility (STDF). It aimed to a) Promote safe trade in animals and animal products by improving the credibility of their health status; and b) strengthen the capacity of diagnostic laboratories for transboundary and economically and socially important diseases (both terrestrial and aquatic) of economic and social importance in the Central America region. It was implemented between 2016 and 2022.

The project supported nine (9) participating laboratories in the region in implementing Quality Management Systems (QMS) and obtaining relevant accreditations, creating a sub-national network of laboratories with the capability to effectively diagnose and mitigate transboundary diseases, and increase Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) capacity in the region. Activities were implemented across eight (8) countries: Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Dominican Republic.

Partners and beneficiaries: The Organismo Internacional Regional de Sanidad Agropecuaria (OIRSA) was responsible for overall project management, implementation and coordination of the project from March 2016 to December 2022. OIRSA collaborates closely with its signatory countries for the prevention, control, and eradication of pests and diseases (notably in terms of porcine, bovine, aquaculture, poultry and beekeeping with regards to animal health). The main project beneficiaries were the participating laboratories in the eight countries, as well the Ministries of Agriculture and Livestock in each government.

The Evaluation: The project impact evaluation (PIE) included document reviews and interviews, as well as quantitative data analysis. Between December 2023 and February 2024, the project evaluator reviewed documents, data and survey results, as well as conducting virtual interviews and undertaking field work in El Salvador and Guatemala. Interviews included OIRSA representatives, as well as leadership and staff from participating laboratories.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Relevance: The project was deemed to be relevant, with evidence of alignment to regional and national strategies. These highlighted enhancing laboratory capabilities for testing and addressing zoonotic diseases and accreditation under ISO 17025 as a priority. The approach was developed with input from beneficiary countries (including eight participating authorities and nine laboratories) with target products and accreditations selected by each country. Commitment letters provided by national counterparts to maintain accreditations attested to initial buy-in, however, frequent political changes eroded beneficiary commitment over time.

Coherence: The project had a unique value to the region; however, the initial design could have been better scaled through broader engagement and commitment from stakeholders (including the private sector, regulatory and financial authorities) to ensure the ongoing maintenance of accreditations. Synergies with partners were consistently and effectively leveraged, with many inter-laboratory exchanges and key relationships with external partners facilitated during implementation. A better dissemination of project results could have generated interest from additional partners.

Efficiency: Despite delayed activities in some participating countries and the impact of COVID-19, implementation was efficient overall with the majority of the budget disbursed by project close. Resources were optimized, with funds for activities not implemented reallocated to increase project scope (e.g. achieving more accreditations and strengthening laboratory capacity). Project and reporting deadlines were largely well-respected, with strong and consistent central coordination through the implementing partner OIRSA.

Effectiveness: Diagnostic capabilities were increased across participating laboratories, with results exceeding initial set targets. The main challenges faced related to COVID-19, political and personnel changes, limited metrology services and the lack of accreditation bodies. Unequal country profiles resulted in uneven pace of implementation amongst participating countries (notably Honduras and Panama). However, accreditations were eventually obtained by all countries across target products, with increased regional SPS capacity evidenced by the expanded processing capacity of participating laboratories. The quality and timing of reporting was largely adequate, but the results framework could have been orientated more effectively towards measuring and assessing impact (i.e. increase in trade of animals and animal products).

Impact: The evidence suggests that increased diagnostic capacity of the regional laboratory network and credibility of the tests has had a positive impact on target product exports, both within the region and externally. Countries saw growth in key markets such as shrimp and cattle, with international markets opening or re-opening since project launch. Additionally, regional ability to rapidly prevent and control endemic and transboundary diseases increased. Positive social impact was highlighted as a result of growth of the livestock industry. Gender and environment were not adequately integrated into the project.

Sustainability: Sustainability was considered during project design with firm commitment originally provided by participating authorities.⁵¹ While accreditations have been largely maintained, changes in leadership and personnel within laboratories have presented significant capacity challenges leading to

⁵¹ In light of this, the planned economic sustainability assessment was dropped from the project scope. Given the initial commitment to maintain accreditations was not effectively carried through resulting in the eventual loss of some accreditations, it may have been beneficial for the planned economic sustainability assessment (Result #10) to have taken place. We note, however, that this would have been at the expense of the substantial additional accreditations obtained through this cost saving.

the loss of accreditations in some countries. This has been compounded by a lack of prioritization and resources to sustain the ongoing cost of required audits, supplies and equipment. The creation of a sub-regional network of laboratories has led to notable sustainability wins, contributing to continued knowledge sharing in the region.

LESSONS LEARNED

There was limited involvement of the private sector, including producers' and exporters' associations, both during project design and implementation. This affected buy-in and ongoing government funding, notably in terms of sourcing vital equipment and audits necessary to sustain accreditation.

The regional and twinning approach proved highly effective for disease specialization. Collaborations (e.g. with the University of Zaragoza to accredit tests for bovine spongiform encephalopathy) fostered knowledge exchange, and international recognition in the testing of specific diseases across the region.

The assistance provided with regards to implementing quality management systems was highlighted as not being practical enough. For instance, the experience of other participating laboratories in implementing QMS was not effectively leveraged to provide hands-on support during the process. This resulted in extensive staff time spent developing registry systems from a low knowledge base.

The lack of ownership for ongoing monitoring at a country level, including the absence of an effective documentation system and centralized database of accreditations, resulted in compliance issues including lapses in accreditations.

The continued support of external partners (such as IAEA and the EU who have on-going initiatives in the region) was evidenced as critical for the procurement and maintenance of specialized laboratory equipment to sustain standards. Equipment is rarely costed in national budgets, representing a notable sustainability risk should this external support end.⁵²

Project results were not systematically and effectively communicated to key ministries such as Ministries of Agriculture, or to regulatory and financial authorities. The link between accreditation and trade statistics could have been better demonstrated to underscore its significance to national interests.

The results framework was geared to monitoring the obtaining of accreditations, and was useful in this respect, however it did not effectively measure project impact.

⁵² It was noted that, to the extent possible, governments should also consider and include this budget item in national planning/budget to ensure this is a joint donor and national effort.

The project scope, focused on obtaining accreditations, was seen as too narrow. Greater impact could have been achieved if scope had covered maintaining and expanding accreditations. Other areas included strengthening biosecurity of laboratories and plant based-testing and accreditations,

There was limited evidence of knowledge sharing between STDF and the OIRSA project, for instance, none of the respondents were aware of available STDF products.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on an assessment of the findings and how they reflect on both the project and the STDF's approach to SPS capacity development, the evaluation team identified the following, limited recommendations:

- Secure long-term commitment from a broader range of stakeholders (e.g. ministries of Agriculture, private sector, regulatory and financial authorities) during design and implementation to expand and maintain accreditation standards. This could include establishing agreements around funding at the project approval stage.
- Continue advocating a regional approach and strengthening regional collaboration between laboratories, as well as expanding partnerships with key actors (e.g. IAEA) committed to addressing zoonotic diseases.
- Enhance measurement and communication of project impact (e.g. evidence of increased exports and mitigation of transboundary diseases) to ensure greater buy-in, and generate more partner interest.
- Establish better documentation and a centralized database to monitor and support compliance with accreditation standards.
- Consider expanding scope to plant testing and accreditations for potential future initiatives given the identified need across the OIRSA region, and the social impact this could yield.

ANNEX C: CASE STUDY SUMMARY – PG567, “FFFZ”

Project aims and objectives: The project ‘STDF/PG/567: F³: Fruit Fly Free Establishment and Maintenance of Fruit Production Areas Free and Under Low Prevalence of Fruit Fly Pests in Southern Africa’ was a project co-funded by the Standards Trade and Development Facility (STDF), the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) and FruitFly Africa (FFA), and remaining funds from a TEAM⁵³ (Tephritid workers in Europe, Africa and the Middle East) meeting. The goal was: to improve market access, revenues and employment in South Africa and Mozambique with regard to export fruit markets where targeted fruit fly pests constitute risks. The objective was to facilitate fruit export in the main horticultural areas in South Africa and Mozambique.

The project supported National Plant Protection Organizations (NPPOs) in South Africa and Mozambique to establish and develop a framework for the maintenance of Pest Free Areas (PFAs) and Areas of Low Pest Prevalence (ALPPs) of fruit fly pests in South Africa and Mozambique. The targeted fruit fly pests were Mediterranean fruit fly, *C. capitata*; melon fly, *Z. cucurbitae*.

Partners and beneficiaries: The Agricultural Research Council (ARC) was responsible for overall project management, implementation and coordination of the project from 2016 to 2023. ARC is one of the principal agricultural research institutions in South Africa, which acts as the research branch of the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF). Eduardo Mondlane University (EMU) assisted ARC with project management and implementation in Mozambique. Activities were implemented by a consortium of eight (8) organizations representing government, NPPOs, research organizations, and fruit growers’ associations. Delivery was overseen by Steering and Technical Advisory Committees.

Targeted beneficiaries were the fruit industries including fruit growers, as well the agricultural departments within the target ministries.

Evaluation: The project impact evaluation (PIE) included document reviews and interviews. Between January 2024 and March 2024, the project evaluator reviewed documents, data, and survey results, as well as conducting virtual interviews and undertaking field work in South Africa and Mozambique. Interviews included a broad range of representatives from across the consortium as well as visiting growers and commercial farms at the province level in Mozambique.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Relevance: The project is deemed to have been relevant, with evidence of alignment to regional and national strategies and the stated priorities of beneficiaries in both countries. These highlighted fruit flies as a priority given their impact on production of main horticultural commodities. Establishing PFAs

⁵³ TEAM is a regional network of researchers dealing with different aspects of tephritid fruit fly.

and ALPPs, with associated buffer zones, according to International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs) standards was therefore highly relevant. The approach was developed through a Project Preparation Grant (PPG) in broad consultation with NPPOs and other Government bodies, research organizations, and fruit growers' associations, including DAFF and DSV, the regulatory bodies in plant health in both countries. Priority issues, pests and target regions were agreed collectively.

Coherence: The project was highlighted as a first in terms of its approach establishing PFAs and ALPPs over such a wide region. However, limiting the project to South Africa and Mozambique was consistently flagged as a shortcoming given the cross-border impact of the pests, and need for a coordinated approach across Southern Africa. A broader systems approach was also recommended.⁵⁴ Synergies with partners were consistently and effectively leveraged, with evidence of the project complementing other fruit fly initiatives by STDF partners, as well as work on other pests (many of which are also ending). The presence of other databases monitoring pest prevalence may have resulted in duplication of efforts.

Efficiency: Despite delayed activities given the impact of COVID-19, implementation was efficient overall with the majority of the budget disbursed by project close. Resources were optimized, with funds reallocated to address logistical hurdles in Mozambique. Project partners contributed 75% of total project budget through both in-kind and financial contributions. Project and reporting deadlines were largely well-respected, with strong and consistent coordination through the implementing partner, ARC.

Effectiveness: The project formalized PFA and ALPP definitions, a process for monitoring surveillance data, and allowed mapping of "hot-spot" corridors, with results largely achieved against initial targets. All targeted regions were monitored effectively with data shared to formalize PFAs and ALPPs, however delays in notification of pest areas by participating authorities impacted full completion of outputs. The main challenges faced for setting up PFAs and ALPPs related to procurement of control materials, security risks, climatic factors, and most importantly political risks (e.g. notification delays). Research was largely carried out effectively, although establishing ALPP thresholds was complicated by limited data, and the relationship between trap catches and fruit fly infestation could only be tested for two crops. Online monitoring tools and protocols were developed, though duplication was an issue. The quality and timing of reporting was largely adequate.

Impact: The evidence suggests a positive correlation in terms of retained market access through defining low-risk areas for fruit trade, notably to main markets such as the EU which have strict regulations related to the targeted pests. However, NPPOs still need to request recognition of the PFAs and ALPPs by importing countries. The impact on market access will therefore only be seen following this official recognition. Nevertheless, there are already indications of maintained and enhanced trade

⁵⁴ It is important to point out some practical limitations to geographical expansion including funding limitations and the ability of STDF to fund larger scaled projects within its operational rules. The project was seen as a pilot project which could be expanded to other southern African countries with possible follow up projects.

between Mozambique and South Africa, as a result of collaboration on the project. The presence of other diseases and pests, affecting products including those targeted by the project, and the limited geographical reach of the project could mean that markets are lost regardless of project outcomes. Positive environmental outcomes were recorded related to reduced reliance on pesticides.

Sustainability: Sustainability was considered during project design with commitment obtained from NPPOs of both countries. While monitoring has continued since project close, this has largely been funded by larger-scale growers and association, with government contributions for this purpose flagged as insufficient (notably given monitoring covers other fruit flies and pests). A notable risk to continued status of PFAs and ALPPs relates to financial constraints of smaller-scale farmers for ongoing pest control, as well as spread through small households which requires continued awareness raising. The fact that the operational database platform for determination of fruit fly status in target regions cannot be integrated with other systems raises concerns about its continued use and sustainability of its data.

LESSONS LEARNED

The current project focused on two countries i.e. Mozambique and South Africa.⁵⁵ The collaboration was positive allowing for a joint approach to the surveillance and response to invasive fruit fly species, notably on the Northern Mozambique border, with the identification of PFAs and ALPPs ultimately helping to facilitate trade between the two countries.

However, given the cross-border nature of pest management, the geographical scope was too limited. Establishing a more integrated regional management program would have meant other phytosanitary aspects could have been dealt with more efficiently and coherently.⁵⁶

The partners were a diverse mix of private and public sector actors. The role of the private sector was especially important given their close links to growers. This ensured they were able to respond rapidly to fruit fly detections, as was evidenced in the Western Cape in South Africa.

The co-financing format of the project (75% from project partners) was essential for overall commitment, however there were some challenges and delays getting all contracts agreed at the outset. The role of the implementing partner and the first work package focusing on program management helped to mitigate consortium challenges.

⁵⁵ The two countries and research partners on the project had a long history of collaboration prior to the project. It was noted that the framework developed for the recognition of PFAs and ALPPS could potentially be extended to other countries.

⁵⁶ For instance, working with the SADC Secretariat on actioning its regional strategy (building on regionally focused initiatives such as the EU funded project (Strengthening Pest and Disease Management in the SADC Region) implemented by CABI which developed a harmonized regional strategy for maize lethal necrosis disease) was proposed as a viable way forward.

The broader systems approach initially proposed in the PPG had to be scaled down given budget constraints. The project was therefore more narrowly focused on defining PFAs and ALPPs and working on more practical applied components. While this represented a good entry point/ baseline to tackle pest management, the research was consequently more limited in scope than originally planned.

One key lesson for the establishment of PFAs and ALPPs was the importance of streamlining trapping data. A major challenge was that trapping data was recorded in different formats across partners. This meant that all historical data had to be manually uploaded into the database in the correct format. As a result of the project, the partners have aligned their data collection methods, and the systems in place now allow for large scale mapping of PFAs and ALPPs specifically for fruit flies.

The project focused on large commercial farms, given these are the primary exporters and the project goal was to enhance market access and increase revenue. While some efforts were made to raise awareness of fruit fly management amongst other groups such as small-scale producers and household growers during delivery through sensitization, training and, in the case of Mozambique, collaboration with partner programs, the reach of these activities was limited. A more integrated approach would have been beneficial, as smaller-scale producers often lack resources and knowledge about pest control, yet they contribute significantly to agricultural outputs, and pose a critical risk to the spread of pests.

While the database was beneficial to streamline trapping data from project partners and allow for area-wide mapping specifically targeted at fruit flies, it was noted that the proliferation of mobile app technologies and the fact that growers use multiple apps⁵⁷ for surveillance purposes posed risks to efficiency and data collection. Making the project database accessible to growers (not just inspection technicians) through a mobile based app would have allowed them to access necessary data to combat pests effectively in real time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Adopt a more integrated approach for future projects, in terms of geographical reach, with broader-based actors across the fruit industry (e.g. smaller scale farmers and households), as well as a wider-based monitoring of other pests beyond fruit flies,⁵⁸ to ensure results are sustained and market access is maintained. This could potentially be achieved through a multi-donor collaboration, and in coordination with Southern African Development Community (SADC).

⁵⁷ Including one of the project partners Fruit Fly Africa which has subsequently created their own database as per a KII.

⁵⁸ While the biggest commonality on the continent is fruit fly, pests such as moths represent a bigger threat to the citrus industry for instance. A number of diseases are currently spreading south from Northern Mozambique including the Panama disease affecting bananas, and the horse fruit fly. Establishing domestic quarantine measures has been challenging for these pests given political implications. This represents a significant risk to continued market access.

- Ensure a robust sustainability plan is in place for continued monitoring activities beyond the project end date. Notably, work with beneficiaries (e.g. Gov. Mozambique) to review options and solutions in place for continued purchase of control equipment.
- Support awareness raising of online monitoring tools (database and identification protocol) to relevant actors to promote their continued use.
- Ensure stronger political commitment to the timely submission of official notifications of PFAs and ALPP. This could be achieved through setting clear timelines for notifications following receipt of scientific data.
- Support the sharing of best practice, including with other regions. Consider developing practical guidelines based on the project experience establishing PFAs and ALPP to add to the body of work and international guidelines available. Building on and broadening out the IAEA-sponsored sterile insect program⁵⁹, including sterilization techniques with area wide baiting/ monitoring program modelling based on climate was recommended.⁶⁰ This expansion would need firm government engagement given it would involve national laboratories.

⁵⁹ Which was rolled out in one of the target regions in South Africa.

⁶⁰ It was noted that rolling out a sterile insect program in other areas, especially the northern part of South Africa, will be challenging as five fruit fly species cause damage to fruit and need suppression.

ANNEX D: TERMS OF REFERENCE

INTRODUCTION

1. The Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) is a global partnership to facilitate safe trade. The STDF promotes improved food safety, animal and plant health capacity in developing countries, based on international standards, so that imports and exports can meet sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) requirements for trade. The international standards recognized in the WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement) provide the technical foundations of the STDF's work.⁶¹ The [STDF Strategy for 2020-2024](#), "Safe and Inclusive Trade Horizons for Developing Countries", outlines how the STDF aims to drive catalytic SPS improvements in developing countries and facilitate safe trade, that contributes to sustainable economic growth, poverty reduction and food security.⁶² Safe trade means trade that is in line with the WTO SPS Agreement, which sets out the basic rules for food safety and animal and plant health standards and requires regulations to be based on science.

2. The purpose of these Terms of Reference (TOR) is to solicit proposals from expert companies for a comprehensive evaluation of the STDF. This evaluation should assess the results and impact of the STDF programme and its three workstreams. While the evaluation will focus on the period from 2020 until present, the emphasis on results and impacts means that work carried out prior to 2020 may also need to be considered. Based on the findings, the evaluation should identify lessons and recommendations to inform the future of the partnership, including development of a new strategy for the period after 2024. More information on the purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation is provided below.

9. OVERVIEW OF THE STDF

3. The STDF brings together diverse stakeholders from across agriculture, health, trade and development. It was formally established in 2004 by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), the World Bank Group, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Trade Organization (WTO), and includes the Secretariats of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC).⁶³ Donors, developing country experts and diverse other international and regional organizations (including regional development banks as well as private sector bodies and non-profit organizations) involved in SPS capacity development also participate in the STDF's global partnership. These include the African Union Commission (AUC), CABI, COLEAD (Committee Linking Entrepreneurship-Agriculture-Development, formerly COLEACP), the Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation (GATF), International Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the International Trade Centre (ITC), Organismo Internacional Regional de Sanidad Agropecuaria (OIRSA), SSAFE and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).⁶⁴

4. As described in the [STDF Operational Rules](#), the STDF comprises three main bodies: the [Policy Committee](#), the [Working Group](#), and the [Secretariat](#). The Policy Committee consists of high-level representatives of STDF partners and

⁶¹ These comprise the standards set by the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the International Plant Protection Convention and the World Organisation for Animal Health (formerly OIE).

⁶² The STDF supports: SDG 1 (No Poverty); SDG 2 (Zero Hunger); SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being); SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth); and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). In addition, the Strategy contributes to SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), SDG 14 (Life below Water) and SDG 15 (Life on Land).

⁶³ The STDF grew out of a joint communiqué issued by the Heads of FAO, the OIE, the World Bank, WHO and the WTO at the WTO Ministerial Conference in November 2001. The communiqué recognized the difficulties faced by developing countries in implementing international standards. It agreed to jointly explore new technical and financial mechanisms for SPS coordination and resource mobilization and to build alliances between standard setting bodies and implementing and financing agencies so as to ensure the most effective use of technical and financial resources. The STDF was formally established in 2004 through the adoption of a Business Plan and the creation of a trust fund.

⁶⁴ See the STDF Strategy 2020-2024 (pg 43) to find out more about stakeholders involved in STDF's work.

donors, and developing country experts. It decides on policy and strategy and is responsible for oversight of the STDF Working Group. The Working Group consists of technical-level representatives of STDF partners (including Codex and IPPC), donors, developing country experts and other organizations involved in the planning and delivery of SPS capacity development. The Working Group reviews and approves work plans and funding requests, and oversees work by the STDF Secretariat. It normally meets twice per year. The STDF Secretariat implements the STDF's work plan and reports to the Working Group. The STDF Secretariat and trust fund are housed and managed by the WTO.

5. As outlined in the Strategy, the STDF works across three work streams – Global Platform, Knowledge Work, and Projects and Project Preparation Grants (PPGs) – to deliver on two closely connected outcomes that contribute to the programme goal and higher-level results. Through convening and connecting stakeholders across its knowledge and project work, and piloting and learning from innovative, collaborative and cross-cutting approaches, the STDF aims to influence and catalyse SPS capacity development work globally.

- Global Platform: STDF convenes and connects diverse public and private sector organizations across agriculture, health, trade and development to facilitate dialogue and exchange experiences, identify opportunities for collaboration, and promote a more coherent approach to SPS capacity development. The STDF Working Group convenes members to share and learn from each other's work, helping to disseminate, influence and scale up good practices.⁶⁵ In addition, the STDF organizes other global and regional events to promote dialogue and share good practices and experiences to improve SPS capacity development.⁶⁶
- Knowledge work: STDF identifies and promotes good practices to improve SPS capacity development outcomes on selected thematic topics that cut across the areas of food safety, animal and plant health, and trade (including [public-private partnerships \(PPPs\)](#), [electronic SPS certification](#), use of [evidencebased approaches to prioritize SPS investments](#) (P-IMA); and [good regulatory practice](#)). STDF members and other stakeholders are engaged in knowledge work, including as part of Practitioner Groups on electronic SPS certification, P-IMA and PPPs.
- Projects and project preparation grants: STDF provides grant support to strengthen SPS capacity in developing countries, in line with beneficiary's needs and priorities.⁶⁷ PPGs (up to US\$50,000) are available to support the formulation of project proposals and/or to carry out feasibility studies, apply SPS-related capacity evaluation tools, etc. Projects (up to US\$1 million) convene and connect public, private and other stakeholders at global, regional and country level to pilot innovative and collaborative approaches, leverage expertise and resources, and deliver results in developing and least developed countries. The STDF Operational Rules set out eligibility criteria and requirements for STDF grant support, as well as the application, review and approval process. The STDF Working Group has approved over US\$67 million for 238 projects (114 projects and 124 PPGs) from 2004 until the end of 2022.⁶⁸

6. The STDF Strategy includes the Theory of Change which outlines the pathway through which the STDF will deliver change. It is accompanied by a [Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning \(MEL\) Framework](#) to track progress and results. Following approval of the MEL Framework by the Working Group in October 2020, a new online tool was procured to deliver innovation and improvements on results reporting, including to map project indicators to programme indicators.⁶⁸ This tool was set up as a pilot in 2022, in cooperation with selected project implementing organizations. It is currently being rolled out to cover all ongoing STDF projects.

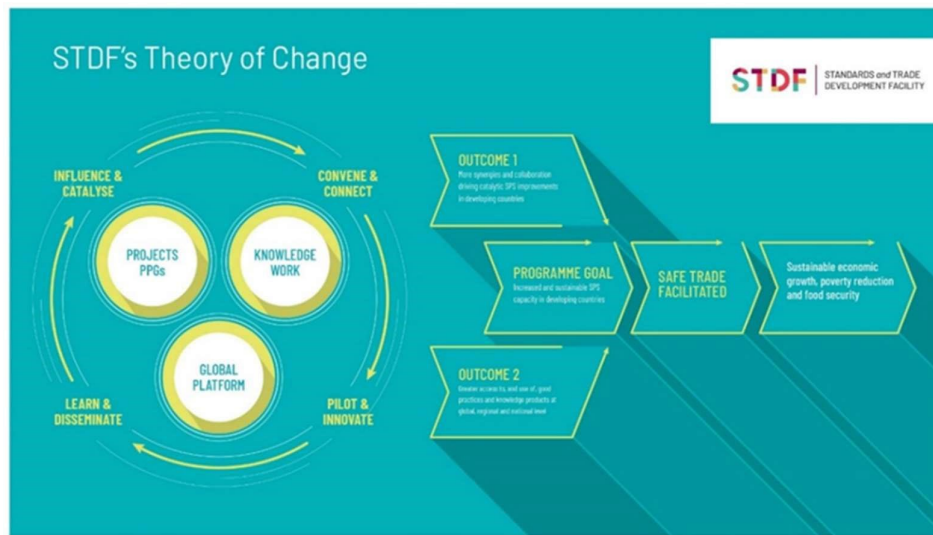
⁶⁵ See more on Working Group meetings at: <https://standardsfacility.org/working-group-documents>

⁶⁶ Information on STDF events is available at: <https://standardsfacility.org/events>

⁶⁷ For information on funding opportunities (including application forms, criteria, etc.), see: <https://standardsfacility.org/funding> ⁶⁸ See project and PPG pages on the STDF website

⁶⁸ Following a procurement process, a contract was signed with DevAlto in November 2021 for the provision of its LogAlto software. See: <https://stdf.logalto.com/#/>

7. The MEL Framework includes a section on risk management, which (i) identifies risks that may affect the delivery and sustainability of the STDF at the programme level; and (ii) includes a risk matrix that outlines how these risks will be managed. Risks that may affect individual STDF projects (and mitigation strategies) are addressed in project documents and logical frameworks. Risk management reports delivered in response to the global Covid-19 pandemic are available on the STDF website.⁶⁹



8. The MEL Framework aims to achieve a balance between upward accountability and learning. It responds to one of the recommendations of the 2019 programme evaluation, which focused on the need to improve learning. The MEL Framework was developed taking into account: (i) the STDF's uniqueness as a multi-partner, multi-sector facility, working at the global, regional and national level, that has a relatively small sphere of direct control versus a wide sphere of influence; and (ii) the STDF's fairly large number of relatively unique and "small" demand-driven interventions, and the need to ensure flexibility to address emerging demand. It has two main objectives:

- i. Ensure accountability: Provide evidence, on a regular basis, on the implementation of the STDF Strategy for 2020-2024, and results and outcomes achieved with the allocated resources.
- ii. Increase learning: Expand knowledge and improve learning about how the STDF's work drives catalytic SPS improvements in developing countries and facilitates safe trade. This includes increased understanding about innovative and cross-cutting approaches to improve SPS capacity of relevance to STDF members and SPS stakeholders in developing countries, including decision-makers.

10. STDF EVALUATIONS

11. External evaluations have been a foundation of M&E efforts for the STDF since its creation. As indicated in the STDF MEL Framework, the purpose of evaluation is to assess the overall relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impact of the STDF's workstreams to ensure accountability to donors, and support learning and future decisions. The MEL Framework further notes that the focus of external programme evaluations is on the impact and results of the entire STDF programme and its three workstreams (addressing, for instance, improved market access and safe trade facilitated, improvements in the effectiveness and efficiency of regulatory

⁶⁹ See: <https://standardsfacility.org/updates-covid-19>

processes, improvements in national food safety, plant or animal health, etc.). The Operational Rules indicate that programme evaluations should normally be concluded one year before the end of the Medium-Term Strategy, unless decided otherwise by the Policy Committee. The STDF has been the subject of four external programme evaluations to date.

12. The most recent external evaluation was concluded in 2019.⁷⁰ Its main objective was to undertake an independent, systematic and objective assessment of the STDF partnership, with a particular focus on the impact and the results achieved by the STDF during the period 2014-2018. This evaluation examined the STDF across three dimensions: (i) overall objectives; (ii) structure (including operations and functionality); and (iii) deliverables across outputs based on the logical framework for the 2015-2019 STDF Strategy. This evaluation produced four key recommendations, supplemented by sub-recommendations. The findings and recommendations were considered by the STDF Working Group and Policy Committee⁷¹, and used to inform the development of the STDF Strategy for 2020-2024. The STDF Working Group has monitored ongoing work to follow-up and address the recommendations.
13. Three previous external programme evaluations¹³ were carried out:
 - An external mid-term review was carried out for the period 2009-2013.¹⁴ It aimed to assess whether the STDF was performing in such a way as to achieve its strategic results, identify challenges and opportunities and recommend adjustments in strategy and implementation, as appropriate. Its recommendations focused on: (i) reviewing the Medium-Term Strategy and strengthening ResultsBased Management; (ii) increased and improved cooperation with regional and global players; and (iii) strengthening the STDF Secretariat's capacity and ensuring effective management of the facility. Follow-up actions included the adoption of the first STDF M&E framework in 2015, as well as amendments to the STDF Operational Rules in 2016.
 - The evaluation carried out in 2008 aimed to review the performance of the STDF in accordance with the STDF Operational Rules. It made recommendations, which resulted in changes to the Operational Rules (including revised criteria for the review and evaluation of funding applications, and the introduction of logical frameworks for STDF projects).⁷²
 - The first external evaluation was carried out in 2005. The purpose was to evaluate the operation of the STDF since its inception, review the administration of the STDF and make recommendations on actions to ensure the smooth functioning of the Facility in the future. One of the main recommendations was to expand membership.⁷³
14. In addition to external programme evaluations, the STDF commissions external ex-post impact evaluations of STDF projects. The Working Group decides on projects to undergo external ex post impact evaluations, based on the Operational Rules. The STDF [Project Evaluation Guidelines](#) are used to ensure consistency and a common standard in quality. Thirty project impact evaluations have been carried out since 2004, and two are due to be concluded by July 2023 (see Appendix 1). In 2019, an [independent meta-evaluation](#) was published, which took stock of the key findings and lessons across 22 external STDF project evaluations.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ [External Evaluation of the Standards and Trade Development Facility \(STDF\)](#). Nathan Associates. 9 July 2019.

⁷¹ The Policy Committee accepted 16 out of 20 sub-recommendations in the Evaluation report. See: https://standardsfacility.org/sites/default/files/Summary_Report_PC_June_2019_Final.pdf ¹³ See reports on STDF website: <https://standardsfacility.org/evaluations> ¹⁴ Mid-term review of the STDF. Saana Consulting, January 2014.

⁷² Review of the STDF. Stuart A. Slorach, November 2008.

⁷³ Review of the STDF. Triple Line Consulting, December 2005.

⁷⁴ See: www.standardsfacility.org/sites/default/files/STDF_Meta-evaluation_EN.pdf

15. All STDF projects are also subject to an independent end-of-project assessment. These assessments are contracted by the implementing agency. They aim to evaluate the final project results, based on the project logical framework and indicators, and are submitted together with the project final report.
16. STDF donors sometimes carry out their own independent assessments of the STDF, including as part of bilateral Aid-for-Trade reviews. Such evaluations (when publicly available) provide relevant and useful feedback on the results and impacts of the STDF programme. For instance, in 2022, the Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) carried out a review to examine the relevance and effectiveness of UK Aid-for-Trade since 2015, assessing to what extent programmes address binding constraints to trade and promote poverty reduction and inclusion, as well as how effectively the UK has worked with partners at the international, regional and country levels.⁷⁵ The consultants carrying out this review met with STDF project stakeholders in Ethiopia. In 2022, France published an external evaluation of its contribution to Aid-for-Trade over the period 2009-2019, which included some attention to the STDF.⁷⁶ In 2022, the STDF's work was considered as part of a WTO external performance audit report on Trust Funds.
17. In addition to the above, the STDF has commissioned thematic assessments. In 2022, an external STDF assessment was carried out to look critically at how gender equality is addressed in STDF's work.⁷⁷ This assessment was carried out in response to the 2019 evaluation's recommendation to deepen attention to crosscutting issues, including to make the linkages more explicit, and to measure and communicate STDF's efforts on cross-cutting issues more clearly and systematically. The assessment drew key findings, conclusions and recommendations to improve gender mainstreaming. In follow-up, the STDF Working Group agreed to develop a Gender Action Plan in 2023 to improve the results and impact of STDF's work.
18. An external assessment on the STDF's work on P-IMA was contracted in January 2023 for finalization in 2023. An external assessment on cross-cutting issues related to the environment (including biodiversity and climate change) is planned in the STDF work plan for 2023.
19. An internal assessment of STDF Practitioner Groups was carried out in 2022 by the STDF Secretariat in cooperation with members of the Practitioner Groups.⁷⁸ The purpose was to: (i) take stock of, reflect on and learn from the initial experiences with the Practitioner Groups; and (ii) propose recommendations (quick wins as well as longer-term actions) to adapt and/or strengthen the Practitioner Groups, as relevant, to contribute more effectively to delivery of the STDF's Strategy.
20. Reports of all STDF evaluations and assessments are available on the STDF website. The findings, conclusions, lessons learned, and recommendations of STDF evaluations are discussed by the Working Group and shared with other relevant stakeholders (via the STDF website, events and other channels).

21. PURPOSE, SCOPE & AUDIENCE OF THIS EVALUATION

19. The purpose of the evaluation will be to objectively assess the results and impact achieved by the STDF, based on the OECD DAC criteria, and capture key lessons learned. The evaluation will focus on harvesting results and impacts that have been achieved during the current Strategy period. This means that the evaluation may also need to consider the effects of activities implemented prior to 2020.

⁷⁵ The final review document is due to be published in Spring 2023. See: <https://icai.independent.gov.uk/review/uk-aid-for-trade/>

⁷⁶ Evaluation de la contribution de la France à l'Aide pour le commerce (2009-2019). Rapport final révisé. EY Consulting. Février 2022.

⁷⁷ See: <https://standardsfacility.org/stdf-gender-assessment>

⁷⁸ See: https://standardsfacility.org/sites/default/files/STDF_Practitioner_Groups_Assessment_Report_30_May_2022.pdf

20. The specific objectives of the evaluation are to:

- I. Identify and compile evidence of STDF's results since 2020 focused on the plausible and distinct contribution that the STDF makes to increased and sustainable SPS capacity in developing countries, and the facilitation of safe trade, as well as higher-level results (including sustainable economic growth, poverty reduction and food security) linked to the Sustainable Development Goals.
 - II. Assess how the Covid-19 global pandemic influenced the operations, delivery and results achieved by STDF's global partnership based on the Strategy for 2020-2024, with attention to the key challenges faced, STDF's flexibility and risk management response, and any other implications for risk management, delivery and/or performance in the future.
 - III. Draw lessons about what has worked well (and not well) in the operation of STDF's global partnership, paying particular attention to changes introduced in follow-up to the 2019 evaluation (including on MEL and cross-cutting issues) and/or linked to the 2020-2024 Strategy (e.g. launch of Practitioner Groups, increase in annual target funding level).
 - IV. Identify strategic opportunities and recommendations to strengthen STDF's global partnership, delivery and results taking into account:
 - the STDF's current mandate and scope;
 - the demand for STDF grants, knowledge and/or other services;
 - the stakeholders involved and governance arrangements, as well as roles, responsibilities and engagement;
 - options for the STDF's global partnership to leverage finance for development (FfD), including private sector financing, to facilitate safe trade; and
 - the global context characterised by increased food insecurity and the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, current and/or future challenges (e.g. Anti-Microbial Resistance, climate change), new approaches (e.g. One Health approach and agri-food systems transformation), as well as other relevant trends (regional integration, South-South trade, trade finance, increased focus on cross-cutting issues including gender equality, environment, peace and human rights).
21. This programme evaluation should be comprehensive in scope, covering all three STDF workstreams: the global platform; knowledge work; and projects and PPGs. In the context of attention to projects and PPGs, the evaluation will include an in-depth assessment (impact evaluation) of three STDF projects with appropriate geographic representation. These projects will be selected by the evaluation company based on criteria detailed in the Inception Report (see below). The project impact evaluations should be carried out in accordance with the STDF Project Evaluation Guidelines.⁷⁹
22. This programme evaluation should build on the findings of other recent evaluations commissioned by the STDF, and where possible and relevant, the ongoing thematic evaluation on P-IMA and the planned evaluation on the environment. It will be expected to assess to what extent and how the recommendations of the previous STDF programme evaluation (published in 2019) were addressed by the STDF Secretariat, the Working Group, Policy

⁷⁹ See: https://standardsfacility.org/sites/default/files/STDF_214_Evaluation_Guidelines_2021_Final.pdf

Committee and other stakeholders, as appropriate. This analysis should consider the specific actions taken in follow-up to each recommendation, as well as the experiences and results achieved.

23. The main audience for this evaluation is members of the STDF Policy Committee and Working Group, as well as the STDF Secretariat. The evaluation is expected to produce detailed and targeted recommendations and lessons to inform the development of the next STDF Strategy and future work, as well as to strengthen the STDF's results and impact. The final evaluation report will be published on the STDF website.

22. GUIDING PRINCIPLES, METHODS & SOURCES OF INFORMATION

24. The evaluation should be guided by the OECD-Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation principles of independence, impartiality, credibility and stakeholder participation in the evaluation process, including the principle of utility.⁸⁰ The company selected to deliver the evaluation, and all the stakeholders involved in the process, are expected to adhere to these principles.

25. The starting point for the evaluation is the theory of change identified in the STDF Strategy. The evaluation should be conducted in accordance with the OECD-DAC criteria for development evaluation (relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, impact), as well as relevant international norms and standards for evaluations (e.g. "Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations"²⁴). The evaluation will be guided by these TORs and an Inception Report (to be produced by the selected company and approved by the STDF Working Group members). The Inception Report should further develop the methodology

and key evaluation questions. While the evaluation may address all the OECD-DAC criteria, it should give particular attention to assessing sustainability and impact.

26. The evaluation should use a mixed methods approach that combines the strengths of different qualitative and quantitative methods to give a comprehensive response to the evaluation questions, in the context of the real-world issues faced (budget, time, access to data, etc.). The methods used should consider and make use of primary data, existing secondary data sources (including data sources identified in the STDF MEL Framework) and data collected by the STDF Secretariat. As noted in the STDF results framework, the programme evaluation is expected to analyse information in existing datasets (UN Stats, OECD DAC AFT database, etc.) that track progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals to provide an indication of how STDF contributes to sustainable economic growth, poverty reduction and food security (SDGs 1, 2, 3, 8, 17). Findings derived from all the sources consulted should be triangulated as far as possible to: i) test the consistency of findings obtained through different instruments; ii) help validate data obtained from different sources and ensure the reliability of the findings; and iii) deepen understanding (for instance by examining changes or lessons learned from different points of view or in different ways).

27. In addition to standard evaluation methods (key informant interviews, surveys, focus groups), the use of innovative methods (e.g. new technologies or artificial intelligence, new data sources, Most Significant Change technique) and qualitative participatory techniques (including engagement of STDF beneficiaries in assessing the STDF's results) is encouraged to generate a strong evidence base, ensure a cost-effective approach and support ongoing learning.

28. The evaluation approach and methodology should take into account: (i) the STDF's uniqueness as a multipartner, multi-sector facility, working at the global, regional and national level, that has a relatively wide sphere of influence; and

⁸⁰ See: www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm
www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1616

²⁴ See:

(ii) the STDF's fairly large number of relatively unique and "small" demand-driven interventions, and the need to ensure flexibility to address emerging demands in developing countries.

29. The methodology should consider the diversity of stakeholders involved in the partnership (for instance through stakeholder mapping, network analysis or other relevant techniques), including their interests and motivations, in order to identify opportunities to target efforts for improved results. Any other relevant stakeholders for the facilitation of safe trade (who are not directly involved in and/or benefitting from the STDF's work) may also be interviewed to identify strategic opportunities to strengthen the STDF's work and/or results in the future. The methodology used should reflect the outcomes and results that are expected under the STDF's results framework, as well as key differences in the objectives and scope of projects supported by the STDF. The evaluation findings should address the impacts of the programme as a whole, as well as the results of different workstreams and synergies and inter-linkages across them.

30. The proposed methodology and the evaluation matrix should be further refined and finalized in the inception phase, including to address how it will provide credible evidence and handle causality properly when considering higher order impacts. It should pay due attention to ensure the quality of data collected, including through the use of data monitoring and quality assurance.

31. The evaluation is expected to include an in-depth desk review, online consultations and interviews, as well as travel to Geneva and selected countries benefitting from STDF support. Developing countries for mission travel will be selected on the basis of the specific criteria to be identified in the Inception Report. These criteria may include, for instance, extent of engagement/involvement as a partner and/or beneficiary in STDF projects and/or knowledge work, geographic/contextual/development characteristics (e.g. LDCs, land-locked economies, countries affected by fragility and conflict, small islands developing states), results achieved, opportunities for learning, etc.).

32. At a minimum, it is expected that the evaluation methodology would include, though not be limited to, the following:

- Desk/document review: Review of key documents (published and unpublished⁸¹ in English, French and Spanish) including the STDF Strategy and MEL documents, as well as [annual reports](#), project and PPG documents (including applications, Secretariat reviews, monitoring and final reports, end-of-project assessments and evaluations, etc.), and any other relevant documents (including, for instance, "demand-side" documents addressing SPS capacity needs or strategies in developing countries). The STDF Secretariat will provide access to relevant documents and materials (including key documents identified in Appendix 2, the online platform used for MEL, and the password-protected Working Group webpages).
- Stakeholder interviews and consultations: This should include interviews with STDF founding partners, donor members, developing country experts, STDF project implementing organizations and beneficiaries at the global, regional and country level in developing countries (e.g. ministries and government agencies, private sector, regional organizations, etc.), any other organizations actively involved in the Working Group and/or collaborating in STDF work, as well as the STDF Secretariat. Other relevant organizations not directly involved in the STDF's work may also be consulted as relevant. In addition to online consultations, some face-to-face interviews may be organized in the margins of the STDF Working Group (if held in-person) and/or the SPS Committee meeting in Geneva in the last quarter of 2023. The methods used (including interviews) should be carried out in accordance with good evaluation practice. Interviews should ensure representative samples of key stakeholders involved in, and/or benefitting from, the STDF are consulted and engaged.
- Assessment of the overall results and lessons of STDF projects and PPGs: The evaluation will assess the overall results, experiences and impacts of STDF projects and PPGs that were ongoing and/or completed since January

⁸¹ Including internal STDF administrative documents, contracts, project documents, etc.

2020 (see Appendix 2). This assessment would primarily be based on the desk review of available documents, as well as virtual consultations and interviews with stakeholders. Key criteria to be used for this assessment should be identified in the Inception report.

- In-depth impact evaluation of three STDF projects completed since 2020, guided by the OECD DAC criteria and the STDF Guidelines for the Ex-Post Impact Evaluation of STDF Projects.⁸² These evaluations should assess the project's results, focused on the outcome and impact level, based on the OECD DAC criteria and the project logical framework. This should include attention to what extent and how the projects responded to needs identified in the beneficiary countries, improved local processes, systems and/or structures for SPS management, and facilitated safe trade. The criteria for the selection of these projects should be described in the Inception Report. It will be important to ensure geographic representation. Other criteria may include, for instance: the type of project and its alignment to STDF's programme goal and outcomes; sector/category (food safety, animal, plant health or cross-cutting); scope (global, regional or national); development characteristics (e.g. LDCs, land-locked economies, countries affected by fragility and conflict or small islands developing states); other aspects (related to local food production, value chains, infrastructure, private sector engagement and capacity, etc.); opportunity for learning. It will be important to ensure diversity in the projects selected for in-depth impact evaluation. These three project impact evaluations would be attached to the Evaluation Report.

33. The methodology should clearly identify any challenges or limitations likely to affect the evaluation, and explain how they would be addressed.

23. EVALUATION QUESTIONS

34. The evaluation questions should focus on the evaluation's objectives and scope, outlined above. They should clearly reflect the STDF's theory of change, intervention logic and the evaluation criteria. They should be clear and focused to facilitate targeted data collection and in-depth analysis on areas related to the scope of the

evaluation, and the evaluation criteria of coherence, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact.

35. The evaluation questions should address the ongoing need (if any) for the STDF's global partnership in the context of the current and expected future global context and SPS capacity development needs in developing countries. In this context, they should also consider the need for and/or extent to which any modifications may be required in the STDF Strategy and delivery to maximize and scale up the STDF's results and impacts.

36. The following broad indicative questions, aligned by the OECD DAC criteria, are expected to guide the evaluation. The company selected to deliver the evaluation will be expected to further develop and refine these questions, and to develop sub-questions, in the evaluation matrix included in the Inception Report for consideration by the Working Group. Specific complementary questions and sub-questions should be developed for the three ex post project impact evaluations to be delivered as part of this programme evaluation. The final set of evaluation questions and sub-questions should enable both qualitative and quantitative methods to be used for the analysis.

Relevance

- How relevant is the STDF's global partnership, grant support and knowledge work to the SPS capacity development needs and priorities of developing countries (including small island developing states and other countries with special needs) in the current global context?

⁸² See: https://standardsfacility.org/sites/default/files/STDF_214_Evaluation_Guidelines_2021_Final.pdf

- How relevant is the STDF for its founding partners, donors and other members, including in the context of the broader Aid for Trade initiative and other large (bilateral and regional) SPS capacity development programmes?

Coherence

- To what extent do STDF's workstreams (projects/PPGs; knowledge work; global platform) align, leverage synergies and/or add value to the work of STDF partners, as well as national, bilateral, regional and/or global initiatives and interventions to build SPS capacity and facilitate safe trade (and vice versa)?
- How could such synergies be increased to support wider scaling up of STDF's knowledge and project work?

Effectiveness

- How well did the STDF adapt its operations and delivery to the challenges caused by the global pandemic, and to what extent has risk management been appropriate and effective across all STDF workstreams?
- How effective is the STDF in: (i) achieving and measuring results under the Strategy for 2020-2024, based on the MEL Framework; and (ii) communicating results based on the Communications Plan?
- What factors have influenced the achievement or non-achievement of the STDF programme objectives?

Efficiency

- To what extent is the STDF making efficient use of time and resources to deliver on the STDF's objectives?
- How efficient are the STDF's governance and operational structures and processes?
- How have recommendations of the programme evaluation in 2019 been implemented?

Impact

- What results has the STDF's global partnership achieved at the level of the programme goal (increased and sustainable SPS capacity in developing countries⁸³)?
- How has the partnership contributed to the facilitation of safe trade, sustainable economic growth, poverty reduction and food security?
- To what extent have gender and environment been mainstreamed in the STDF?
- What intended and unintended impacts linked to STDF's work can be observed in developing countries, as well as in the planning and programming work of donors and other organizations involved in SPS capacity development and Aid-for-Trade?

Sustainability

- To what extent are the results achieved by the STDF sustainable?
- What major factors influence the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability, and how can sustainability be enhanced?
- To what extent are STDF Working Group members and beneficiary countries engaged in and contributing to the sustainability of STDF knowledge work and projects, and what opportunities exist to improve sustainability?

Other

⁸³ Increased and sustainable SPS capacity is based on the ability to meet the standards of the three international standard-setting bodies recognized in the WTO's SPS Agreement – the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the World Organisation for Animal Health, and the International Plant Protection Convention (see STDF MEL Framework, para 23).

- To what extent has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the performance and future-orientation of the STDF (including the delivery mechanism, as well as the type of deliverables)?
- How can the work delivered by STDF's global partnership (including relatively "small" projects) be leveraged and/or scaled up (including via FfD opportunities) to add greater value and increase impact? ☐ What key factors are likely to shape the future of the STDF's global partnership?
- What is the overall vision of STDF partners, donors and other organizations involved in SPS capacity development, including beneficiaries in developing countries, for the STDF?
- What strategic opportunities exist to adapt and strengthen the STDF's partnership for improved results and impacts?

24. MANAGEMENT OF THE EVALUATION

37. The STDF Secretariat will coordinate administrative aspects related to the evaluation and act as the main point of contact for the evaluation team. As part of this role, the STDF Secretariat will make available background information and documents, provide contact information on relevant stakeholders, provide support to set up meetings (as required) and on any other logistical aspects. The Secretariat will organize meetings to enable the evaluation team to present the draft evaluation report to the STDF Policy Committee and Working Group.

38. An Evaluation Steering Group, comprised of selected members of the STDF Working Group (representing STDF partners, donors and developing country experts) will be established to: (i) provide guidance and oversight to the evaluation process, including to consider progress updates from the evaluation company; and (ii) consult with their respective constituencies to ensure the provision of timely feedback and comments on draft reports delivered as part of the evaluation. The Evaluation Steering Group would meet (online) as required. The STDF Secretariat will join the Steering Group in a non-official capacity to provide administrative and any other support, as needed.

39. The draft Inception Report and draft Evaluation Report (mentioned in the deliverables below) will be submitted to the STDF Working Group for review and comments. The Working Group will approve the Inception Report. Following comment and review by the Working Group, the final draft Evaluation Report will be submitted to the STDF Policy Committee for consideration and final approval. The evaluation progress updates

will be submitted to the Evaluation Steering Group for consideration and comments, if any. The STDF Secretariat will have an opportunity to comment on draft reports produced as part of the evaluation. The company carrying out the evaluation will be expected to revise the draft inception and draft evaluation reports to consider comments and suggestions received from the STDF Working Group, Policy Committee and STDF Secretariat, as appropriate.

25. TIMEFRAME

40. The evaluation should begin in the second half of 2023. The evaluation process should take approximately seven months, with the final evaluation report due by the end of May 2024. The expected timeline for the evaluation process is outlined below. The final schedule for the evaluation delivery will be discussed and agreed with the selected company before signature of the contract.

Milestone	Timeframe	Deadline	Authorization to proceed to next milestone
1. Signature of Protocol for Inception Report between Company and WTO		End August 2023	

2. Submission of draft Inception Report by company	Within four weeks of signature of Protocol	Estimated by 29 Sep. 2023	Consideration of draft Inception Report by STDF Working Group
3. Approval of Inception Report by STDF Working Group	Within four weeks of receipt of Inception Report	Estimated by 27 Oct. 2023	Approval of Inception Report
4. Signature of Contract between Company and WTO	Upon approval of Inception Report	Estimated by end Oct. 2023	Contract signed
5. Submission of draft Evaluation Report by company and presentation to STDF Working Group (online meeting)	Within 4.5 months of signature of Contract	Estimated by 15 Mar. 2024	Consideration of draft Evaluation Report by STDF Working Group
6. Comments on draft Evaluation Report provided by STDF Working Group	Within three weeks of receipt of draft Evaluation Report	Estimated by 5 April 2024	Working Group comments on evaluation provided to company
7. Submission of revised Draft Evaluation Report by company and Presentation to STDF Policy Committee	Within four weeks of receipt of comments from Working Group	Estimated by 3 May 2024	Receipt of comments from Working Group
8. Submission of Revised Final Evaluation Report and publication on STDF website	Within two weeks of Policy Committee meeting	Estimated by 31 May 2024	Approval by Policy Committee

26. DELIVERABLES

41. The following deliverables are due as part of the evaluation:

i. Draft Inception Report (a maximum of 10 pages, excluding annexes).

- The Inception Report should provide information on: the background and objectives of the evaluation; the evaluation purpose and scope; key stakeholders in the evaluation process and the approach to engagement; description and justification of the evaluation methodology; the refined evaluation questions and the evaluation matrix; identification of challenges and mitigation strategies; proposed structure of the final Evaluation Report; the evaluation work plan (including timelines for each deliverable); annexes (e.g. list of consulted documents, interview guides for the different stakeholders, survey questionnaire).
- The quality of the Inception Report will be assessed on the basis of how it meets the specifications of the TORs, including the focus on impact and sustainability, the approach to combine qualitative and quantitative

methods, the use of innovative evaluation methods, the development and refinement of the evaluation questions, the suggested approach for the ex post project impact evaluations, the overall analytical approach that will be used to judge performance under the individual evaluation questions.

- ii. Final revised Inception Report.
 - iii. Evaluation progress updates (approximately three pages), due at the start of every second month following approval of the final Inception Report.
 - iv. Draft Evaluation Report (approx. 30 pages, excluding the executive summary and annexes⁸⁴) that sets out the context to the evaluation (including the objectives, scope, etc.), explains the evaluation methodology and any limitations, clearly presents and analyses the evaluation findings and lessons learned, and includes detailed, targeted and actionable recommendations based on the findings. Three project impact evaluation reports will be included as attachments to the main Evaluation Report.
 - v. Revised draft Evaluation Report.
 - vi. Final Evaluation Report (approx. 30 pages excluding the executive summary and annexes).
42. The methodology, approach, evidence, findings and recommendations of the evaluation should be communicated clearly and concisely. Reports should be high-quality and user-focused, and analytical rather than descriptive. The evaluation report should be structured around a set of main messages or key findings (based on an analysis of all the data and information considered, rather than simply reporting responses to the evaluation questions posed) to avoid redundancies in reporting individually on different evaluation criteria or questions, which may generate similar findings.
 43. The evaluation report should include a detailed description and analysis of the outcomes achieved by the STDF, as well as recommendations and lessons learned clearly linked to the findings. The recommendations should focus on opportunities to strengthen and improve the results and sustainability of all workstreams (including specific recommendations to improve the financial viability, effectiveness, impacts and sustainability of STDF projects) based on the findings. Recommendations should propose cost-neutral alternatives and/or include an analysis of the cost implications (both financial and human resources) of implementation by the STDF Secretariat, STDF partners or other members, as relevant (including attention to overhead costs). Based on the findings, the Evaluation Report should identify key lessons that are relevant for the STDF related to innovation, emerging needs and/or future trends, sustainability, FfD and/or up-scaling, etc.
 44. The evaluation company is encouraged to complement the final evaluation report with other reporting methods (e.g. briefings, infographics, presentations) that present the key takeaways, findings and recommendations in a more communications-friendly manner. All reports should be delivered in English.

27. REQUIRED COMPETENCIES OF EVALUATION COMPANY/TEAM

45. The evaluation will require the services of an experienced company with expertise in the evaluation of multi-donor programmes, initiatives and/or partnerships in developing countries related to trade and development. The company should assemble a team of experts/consultants to carry out the evaluation (hereafter referred to as "the team"), led by a distinguished and experienced team leader.
46. The team shall have the following profile and skills:
 - Proven experience in the monitoring and evaluation of trade and development programmes, including development and application of evaluation methodologies that include quantitative and qualitative methods, data collection

⁸⁴ The annexes would include ex post impact evaluation reports of two STDF projects (each approximately 20 pages).

(including through survey questionnaires, consultations and interviews involving multiple organizations and participants) and analysis.

- In-depth knowledge of project and programme formulation, implementation and coordination processes and issues.
 - In-depth knowledge and understanding of problems faced by developing countries in the implementation of international standards for food safety, animal and plant health, regional and global markets, and the WTO SPS Agreement.
 - Extensive experience working with multi-stakeholder global programmes or initiatives including understanding of the political and diplomatic dimensions.
 - Excellent analytical, drafting and communication skills in English (and working level in French and Spanish for surveys and interviews).
47. The team leader will be responsible for the overall conduct of the evaluation, including representing the team in meetings and submitting/presenting all evaluation deliverables in a timely manner. He/she shall have the following skills:
- Demonstrable skills (at least 15 years) in managing evaluation teams to deliver quality evaluation products within tight timescales.
 - Strong skills in applying both qualitative and quantitative methodologies and techniques to the evaluation of global programmes.
 - Evaluation experience in a developing country context.
 - In-depth knowledge of institutional issues related to development programming (including funding and administration and the role of the donors, UN agencies and partnerships).
 - Extensive experience working with multi-donor/partner/beneficiary initiatives, including understanding of the political and diplomatic dimensions, and managing a complex evaluation process in that context.
 - Excellent communication skills (oral and written) in English.
 - Team leadership and management, interpersonal/communication skills.
 - Relevant previous experience with the company submitting the bid to carry out this evaluation (including leadership role on at least three project/programme evaluations).
 - Post-graduate degree in agriculture, trade, development, M&E or related field.
48. The CVs of team members shall be made available in the technical proposal. The CVs will be used strictly for this assignment and within the norms of privacy protection.

28. SUBMITTING A PROPOSAL – SELECTION PROCESS

A. Content of technical proposals

49. Technical proposals should contain the following elements:
- i. Introduction, which must demonstrate a clear understanding of the STDF programme and the overall expectations of the evaluation.
 - ii. Interpretation and understanding of the detailed requirements of the evaluation, which must demonstrate a clear understanding of the TOR.
 - iii. Proposed work plan for the evaluation (start and end dates; proposed dates for important meetings, processes and deliverables; division of days per task and firm's team members).
 - iv. Detailed profile of the company highlighting expertise and experience relevant to the evaluation of the STDF (statement of capability).
 - v. Details of the proposed team for the evaluation and the division of roles and responsibilities including short profiles highlighting relevant qualifications, expertise and experience (full CVs should be attached as annexes).

- vi. Description of three (3) similar assignments (including details of the assignment, web links to any reports available in the public domain, name and contact details of representative of the client) delivered by the company; the proposed team leader for the STDF evaluation must have lead the team for at least one of these assignments).
- vii. Vendor registration form duly filled in and signed off.

B. Content of the financial proposal

- 50. The financial proposal should follow the matrix provided in Annex III of the Letter of Invitation.

C. Selection process

- 51. The Letter of Invitation provides additional detail on the administrative procedure for the submission of proposals.
- 52. Technical proposals will be evaluated based on the criteria including in Annex II of the Letter of Invitation.
- 53. Shortlisted bidders will be invited to make an online presentation on their methodology, approach timelines and experience to carry out the evaluation and to introduce the team leader. Team leaders and key company representatives must be present for this interview (60 minutes in total), which is estimated to take place between 21-26 June 2023 (Appendix 4).

29. KEY DATES FOR THE EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS

- 54. The expected timeframe for the review and evaluation of proposals received is outlined below.

Task	Target Date
Launch of WTO Procurement Process	Week of 8 May 2023
Q&A	17-23 May 2023
Closing of the RFP	7 June 2023
Interviews	20-26 June 2023
Signature of protocol with Evaluation Company	By end August 2023
Signature of contract upon acceptance of Inception Report	Estimated by end October 2023

30. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

55. All members of the evaluation team will be independent and shall respect ethical standards with respect to conflict of interest, confidentiality and transparency. The company (and consultants proposed) should declare any potential conflicts of interest that may be inherent in their submissions. This should include information on any prior involvement of the company (as well as any of the consultants and team members proposed) with the STDF and/or work carried out for the STDF, including information on any previous assignments carried out for the STDF, as relevant. WTO reserves the right to accept or refuse a proposal for the evaluation on the basis of the above.

31. CONTRACTUAL PROCESS

56. Once the competitive process is concluded, a Protocol shall be signed between the WTO and the selected provider (Evaluation company) based on the technical and financial proposals submitted.
57. The Protocol is an intermediary binding contractual document that enables the Evaluation company to carry out work before a firm contract is signed.
58. A sample Protocol document is provided as Appendix 3 to the TOR.
59. Upon signature of the Protocol, the Evaluation company is authorized to carry out work towards compiling the Inception Report. The Team Leader will be briefed by the STDF Secretariat and asked to provide an Inception Report within six weeks of signing the Protocol.
60. Once the Inception Report is approved, WTO will sign a contract with the company, and the evaluation team may begin implementation of the work.
61. In the case that the Inception Report is not acceptable to the STDF Working Group, as per the indicated Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in these TOR, the WTO reserves the right to terminate the Protocol and cease the contractual relationship with the provider.

32. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

62. The selected company shall guarantee the availability of the Team Leader throughout the whole duration of the contract. In addition, the company shall guarantee the availability of the resources proposed at the time of submission deemed adequate to carry out the work and replace them with equivalent staff if need be, at no cost for the WTO. Any change to the evaluation team shall be notified in advance and is subject to written approval by the WTO. Failure to comply with the requirements in this paragraph may result in contract termination by the WTO.

33. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

63. The performance of the Evaluation company (firm and the team dedicated to the project) will be assessed on the basis of the following key performance indicators (KPIs) from the inception phase onwards:

KPIs	Measurement During the Project	STDF/WTO Standard
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Adherence to agreed project schedule		
The Evaluation company completes project phases by STDF-assigned	Number of failures to meet accepted deadlines	1
KPIs	Measurement During the Project	STDF/WTO Standard
deadlines. All incremental submittals shall be according to mutually agreed-upon schedules. Technical and other reports/reviews shall be submitted as per project schedules.		
Quality		
a) Reports: Reports submitted shall be clear, relevant, well presented and received on time.	Number of non-conformities accepted.	1
b) Reports should be error-free, without typos.	Number of requests for language edits	1
c) Completeness: Reports and other work shall be complete and detailed, encompassing all areas as required.	Number of requests to include missing information	1
d) Conformity to the TOR: The deliverables conform to the TOR established by the STDF.	Number of deviations	0
Coordination and communication		
Facilitating meetings, clear communications to all stakeholders	Negative feedback from stakeholders involved in meetings	1
Acknowledgement within 3 working days of questions, queries, etc. and prompt, detailed response with five working days	Number of deviations from expected timeframe	1
Technical capacity		
Team engages effectively on the subject matter of the evaluation with relevant stakeholders	Negative feedback received from stakeholders	0

In the event that an indicator is found to be non-satisfactory, the Evaluating company is expected to take immediate action to readjust the services as requested by the STDF/WTO within a five-day period and within the scope of this contract. Failure to do so may lead to termination.

ANNEX E: PERSONS INTERVIEWED

Name	Role
Abelardo De Gracia Scanapieco	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Adam Herden	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Adrian Millar	Former Donor
Aichetou Ba	Secretariat
Aine Doody	Donor
Alegrias Elias	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Alex Michell Hasbun Gadala Maria	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Alongkot Phodee	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Andrea Giacomelli	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Dr Aruna Manrakhan	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Azarias Francisco	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Betsy BaysingerWolff	Donor
Bhanuja Wijayatilaka	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Brent Wilson	Donor
Carol Quashie-Williams	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Catalina Pulido	Secretariat
Catherine Constant	Donor
Chanintorn Doungsaard	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Chenge Nyagweta	Secretariat
Chortip Salyapongse	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Chris Dale	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Christiane Wolf	Partner
Craig Peter Bailey	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Dalilo Ambasse	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
David Tenakanai	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Domingos Cugala	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Domingos Jequessene	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Durga Prasad Bhusal	External
Eduardo Martinez	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Edwini Kessie	Partner
Eleonora Dupouy	Partner
Elgin Atakli	Donor
Elma Carstens	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Gabor Molnar	Partner
Gian Dutoit	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Gillian Mylrea	Partner
Gracia Brisco	Partner

Name	Role
Guillermo Cruz Henriquez	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Hean Sereivuth	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Heng Chhun Hy	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Herber Ronaldo Morales Estévez	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Horrays Friaca	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Ian Naumann	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Ibrahim xx	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
JanHendrik Venter	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Jill Luxenberg	Donor
Joanna Grainger	Donor
Johana Polvi	Consultant
John Ayre	Former Donor
John Breckenridge	Partner
John Paul Maminta	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Julie Mokwele	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Juliet Goldsmith	Developing Country Expert
Kanyakorn Uthai	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Karina Maza	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Karn Illes	Consultant
Kateryna Onul	Partner
Kelly McCormick	Donor
Khonesavanh Chittarath	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Kraiwt Sirianuntapat	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Kyle Bonsu	Donor
Laila Jumaiyah Saleh Huddin	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Laura Canhangan	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Luis Bota	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Maquival Joaquim	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Marcela Marchelli de Peraza	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Marjorie Kemoi	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Marlynne Hopper	Secretariat
Martin Epafra Kimanya	Developing Country Partner
Martjin Boelen	Donor
Mary Grace Mandigma	Developing Country Expert
Matthew Addison	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Mayra Motta	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Melvin Spreij	Secretariat
Michael Roberts	Partner
Monica Vides	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Prasadi Kanchanamala	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Mu Mu Thein	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary

Name	Role
Nidia Sandoval de España	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Nur Zaitasha Mahmudin	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Nuttima Kositcharoenkul	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Nydiane Razafindrahaingo	Secretariat
Olivia Riera Lamiroy	Donor
Orawan Jittham	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Pablo Jenkins	Secretariat
Paola Michelutti	Secretariat
Pedro Paulino	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Pete Pederson	Consultant
Peter van Dijk	Donor
Philippe Isler	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Phoowanarth Maneechoat	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Pia Addisson	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Prateep Arayakittipong	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Ramez Alhazaa	Donor
Ravi Kheterpal	Developing Country Expert
Rob Ahern	Donor
Ronal Bernal	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Rose Souza Richards	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Roshan Khan	Former Secretariat
Sanjay Dave	Developing Country Expert
Sar Chanthy	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Sasithorn Khaoweangjan	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Serra Ayril	Partner
Shane Sela	Partner
Simon Hess	Partner
Simon Padilla	Secretariat
Somkhit Sengsay	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Stan Phillips	Donor
Sukanya Srisubat	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Sumana Simasaalit	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Supawadee Naktae	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Sven Olander	Donor
Tapiwa Latifa	Partner
Tayutic Mena	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Tertia Grove	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Thanana Choochuai	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Thilak Siriwardana	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Thoa Hoàng	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Tom Heilandt	Partner

Name	Role
Tran Thi Hong Thuy	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Udorn Unahawutti	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Lic. Vanessa Salazar	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Vaughan Hattingh	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Víctor Hugo Guzmán	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Visoni Timote	Developing Country Expert
Wanich Khampanich	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Watthikorn Phuntarak	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Willem Hoffman	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
William xx	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Yinglak Tongin	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Yodsavadee Mengead	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary
Yuvarin Boontop	Project Stakeholder / Beneficiary

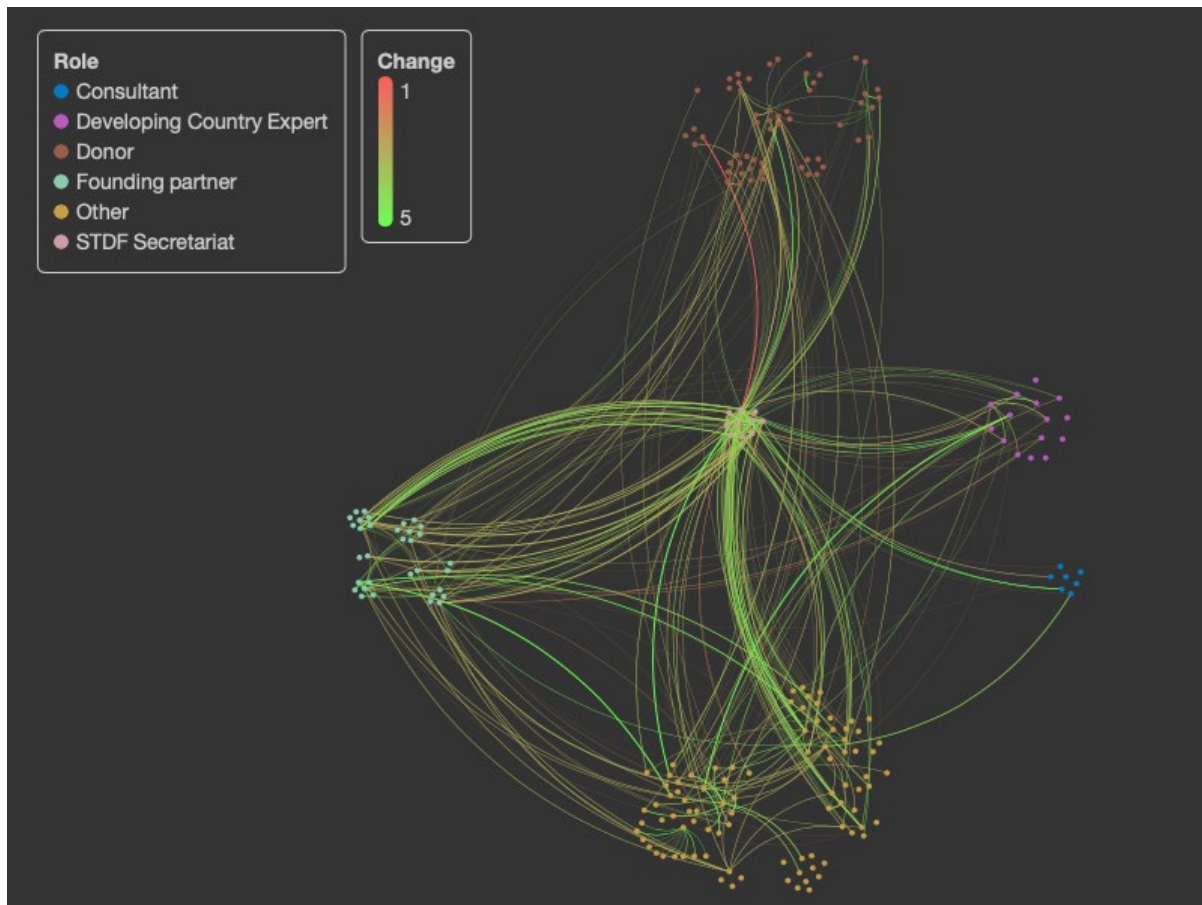
ANNEX F: NETWORK ANALYSIS

OVERALL ANALYSIS OF NETWORK

The network analysis of the STDF partnership was conducted based on a relationship survey that was sent to all key stakeholder groups. The survey was sent to 152 individual stakeholders and 21 current and former STDF Secretariat staff members. The overall number of complete responses was 81, resulting in a response rate of 47%. The total network diagram developed from the responses consists of 223 nodes, or individuals, and 524 edges, or connections between individuals.

In the whole of network diagrams these nodes are clustered using the STDF designation to six different roles: Founding partner; Donor; Developing country expert; Consultant; STDF secretariat; and Other. The strength of the edges is defined based on the response to a question asking the frequency of the interactions with the selected individuals (the maximum was 12 times/month). The colour of the edges is based on the response on how these have changed since 2020 (scale 1: “significantly less frequent” to 5: “significantly more frequent”).

DIAGRAM 1: WHOLE OF STDF CURRENT NETWORK



Note: includes all nodes and edges, except those related to former STDF Secretariat members

A depiction of STDF's entire current network (diagram 1) suggests that the network has strengthened significantly since the start of the strategy period in 2020. This is evident based on the largely green colouring of the edges. This phenomenon is also supported by an analysis of the level of collaboration between different roles. Table 1 depicts the level of edges starting from each group (row) and leading to the six groups (columns). For example, no edges commenced from the "Consultant" group to the "Consultant", "Developing country expert" or "Donor" groups, whereas 75% of edges were directed to the "STDF Secretariat". Overall, the STDF Secretariat is clearly the densest grouping within the network, with 29%-75% of interactions of each of the groupings directed towards it, in high contrast to its relative size of only 5% of overall nodes. While it is not a surprise that the STDF Secretariat has a central role in the network, perhaps it is somewhat surprising how central this is. Importantly, when former STDF Secretariat members are excluded from the analysis, the depiction of change associated with the Secretariat is highly positive. Notably, all of the groupings except the "Consultants" had a higher level of

interaction internally compared to their relative sizes, suggesting that the groups form dynamic sub-networks.

TABLE 1: COLLABORATION MATRIX OF WHOLE OF STDF CURRENT NETWORK

	Consultant	Developing Country Expert	Donor	Founding partner	Other	STDF Secretariat
Consultant	0%	0%	0%	13%	13%	75%
Developing Country Expert	0%	17%	2%	21%	21%	40%
Donor	0%	1%	34%	19%	14%	32%
Founding partner	1%	5%	15%	34%	16%	29%
Other	0%	4%	9%	12%	44%	30%
STDF Secretariat	2%	7%	18%	19%	25%	29%
Relative Size	3%	7%	27%	16%	42%	5%

Note: Bolding denotes collaboration level higher than relative size

COMPARISON OF FOCUS SECTORS

The survey respondents were asked to identify their primary sectors of interest from STDF's three focus areas: Animal health; Food safety; and Plant health. These were used to create sub-networks as depicted in diagrams 2-4 below. While the network maps are broadly similar, with the main arteries repeated, there are important differences in the secondary and tertiary nodes and edges. This is confirmed in the analysis of the size of the sub-networks, as depicted in table 2. While Food safety has the largest number of nodes, it has the lowest network density – or the number of relationships that do in fact exist as a percentage of the number of potential relationships that could exist in the network.

TABLE 2: SIZE OF SECTOR SUB-NETWORKS

	Animal health	Food safety	Plant health
Nodes	55	77	60
Edges	207	285	225
Network density	13.9%	9.7%	12.7%

As expected, major differences in the sub-networks would appear to be in the “Founding partner”, “Developing country expert” and “Other” groups.

DIAGRAM 2: STDF CURRENT NETWORK FOR ANIMAL HEALTH FOCUS

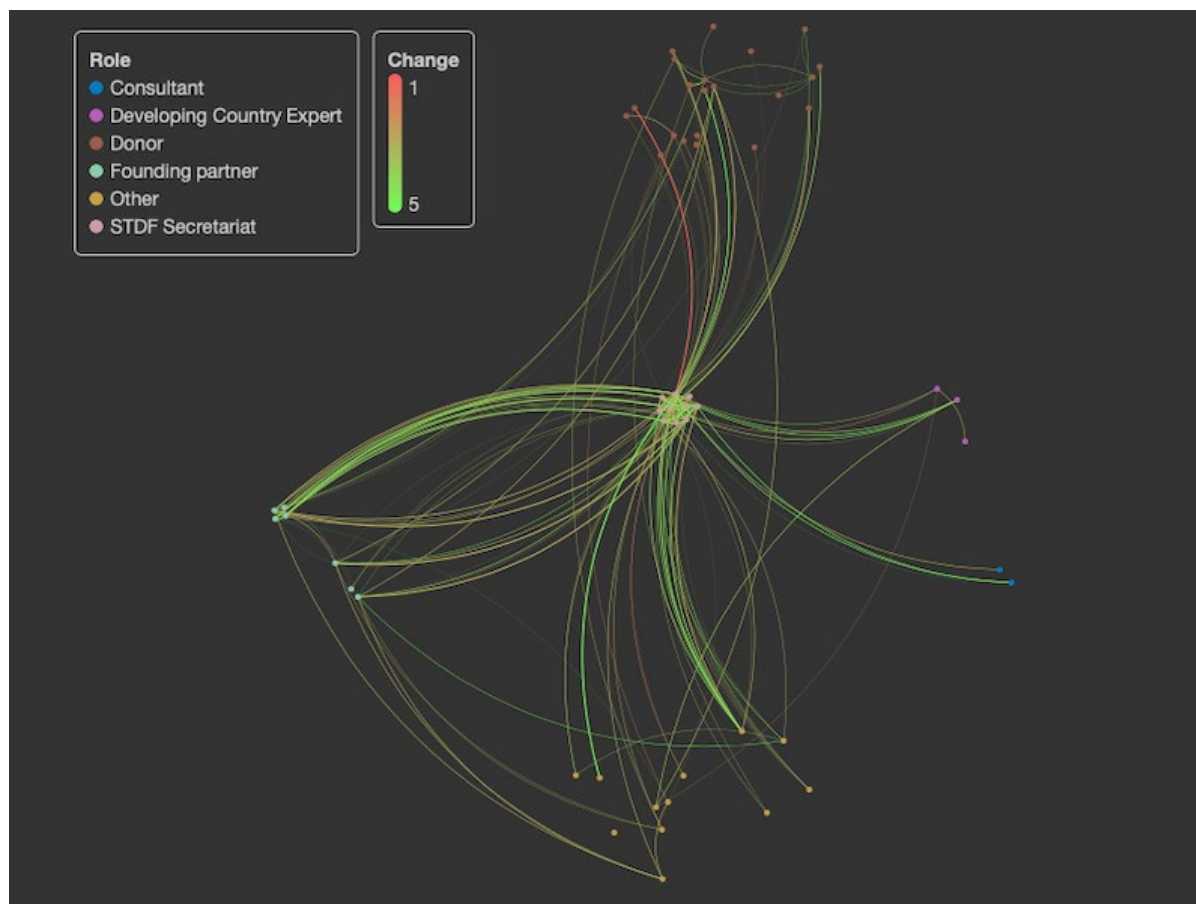


DIAGRAM 3: STDF CURRENT NETWORK FOR FOOD SAFETY FOCUS

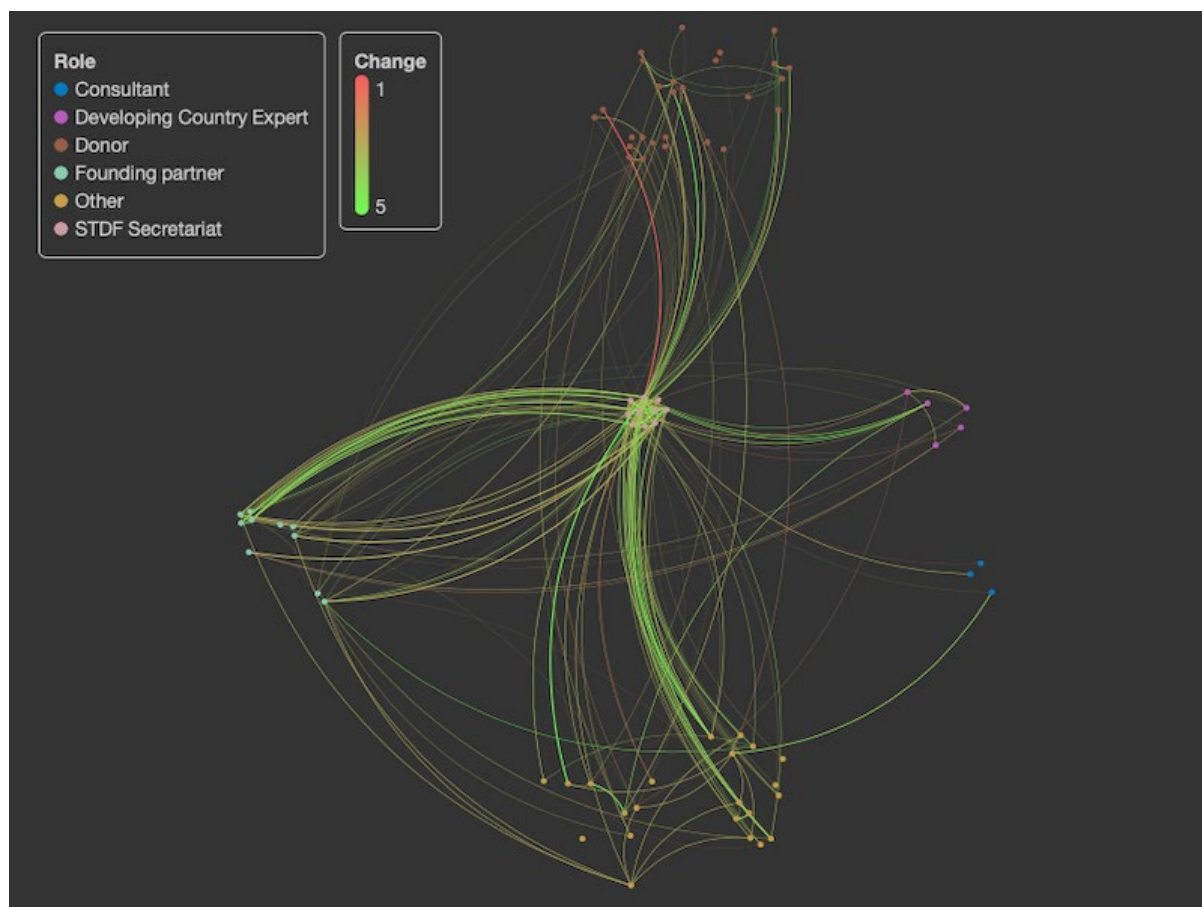
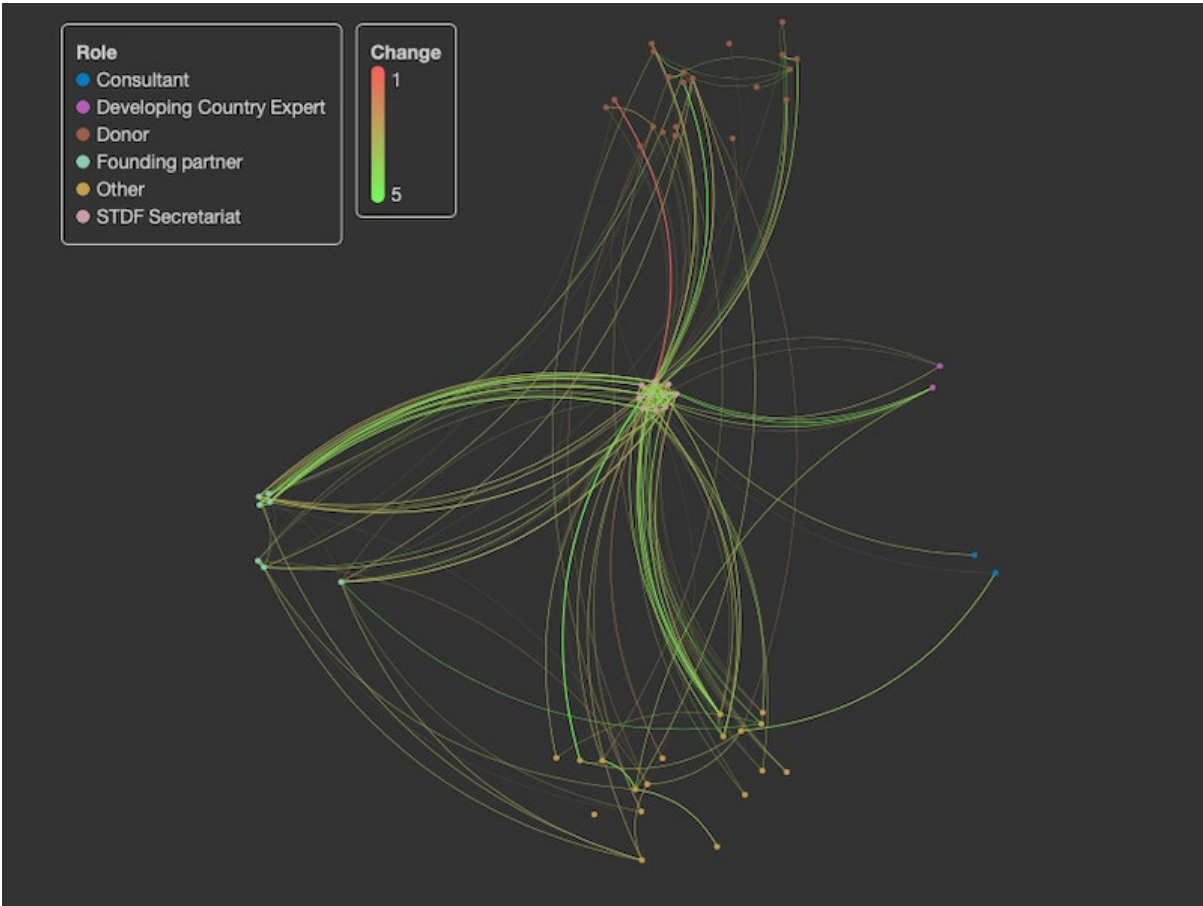
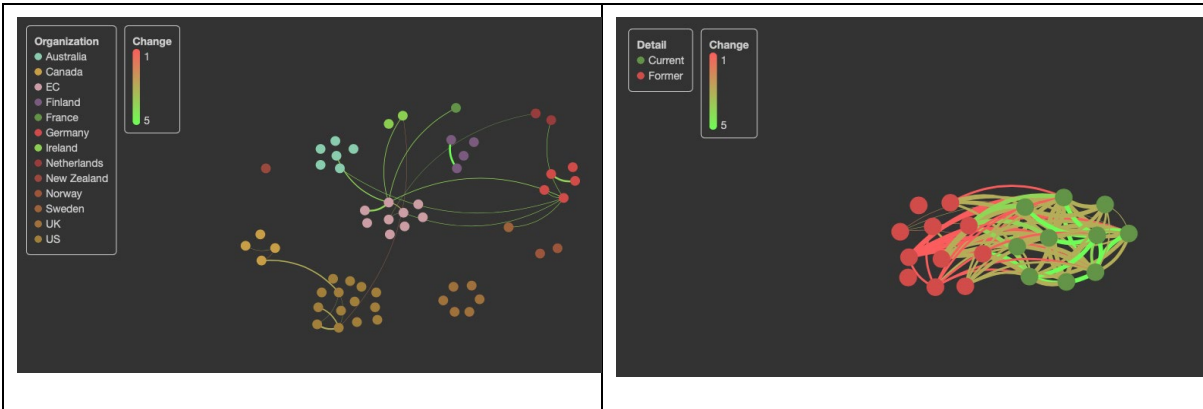


DIAGRAM 4: STDF CURRENT NETWORK FOR PLANT HEALTH FOCUS



COMPARISON OF SUB-NETWORKS ACROSS GROUPS

DIAGRAMS 5-8: GROUP SUB-NETWORK INTERACTIONS



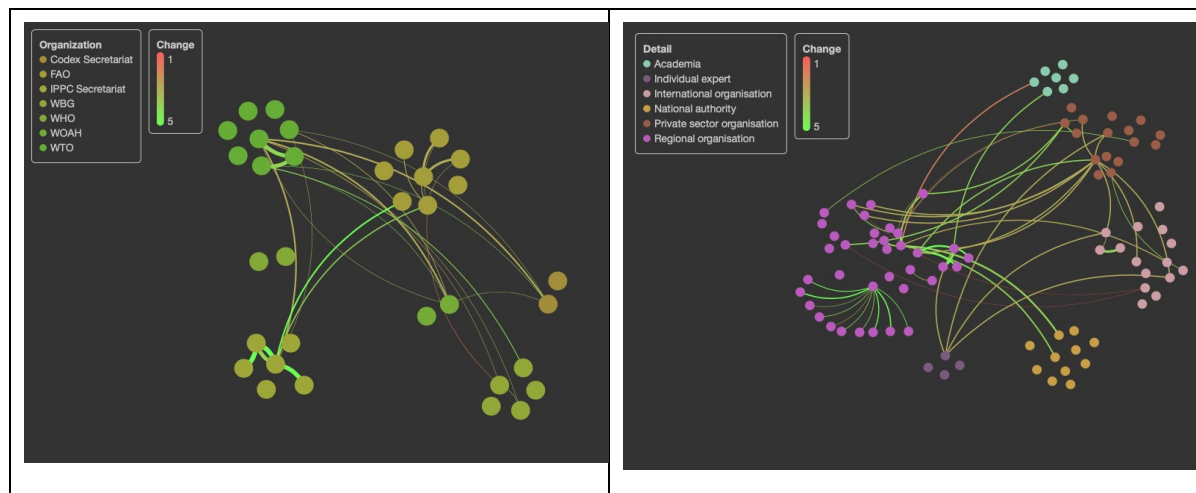


TABLE 3: SIZE OF GROUP SUB-NETWORKS

	Donors	STDF Secretariat	Founding partners	Other
Nodes	57	21	33	90
Edges	26	93	31	52
Network density	1.6%	44.3%	5.9%	1.3%

A more granular analysis on the group sub-networks reveals some interesting patterns. While it is likely that the limits of the survey methodology are limiting our visibility to the entirety of the STDF network, some emerging findings can be identified. Members of the second tier of the network are connected to a much larger group of new nodes in their home region. This is the case, for example with OIRSA. More concentrated fostering and sophisticated tracking of the development of such second and third tier networks should be an area of interest for the STDF in the future.

It is a challenge to make far reaching conclusions based on one piece of data. This emphasizes why it would be important for STDF to collect network data over time. Being able to represent network data as a time series would a powerful tool to understand and explain how the anticipated catalytic network effect of the partnership functions.

THE STDF SECRETARIAT AS A NETWORK CATALYST

When asked about individuals that provide the respondents with information that is critical to your work on SPS capacity development and safe trade (Q5); one could turn to with a new idea (Q6); or helps to connect with organizations outside of their immediate network (Q7), over 50% identified one or more of STDF Secretariat staff. While undoubtedly the survey methodology is prone to bias, this result nevertheless highlights the important and useful role that STDF Secretariat continues to play in acting as a network catalyst. The STDF provides a marketplace for information or sharing new ideas as well as a place to make new connections.

