

First Progress Report on Project STDF-IICA-108 5 April 2008

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Project title: Sustainable institutional capacity building in the countries of the Americas to consolidate active participation in the SPS Committee and move forward with implementation of the WTO/SPS Agreement.

Objectives of the project:

- a) To foster a common and shared vision within the countries (public and private sectors) and among the countries of the Americas, in order to monitor and consolidate their institutional capacity building in the area of sanitary and phytosanitary measures.
- b) To continue providing support for the development of real and potential capacities in the countries of the Americas, in order to enable them to participate more actively and effectively in the SPS Committee.
- c) To consolidate technical cooperation between countries in the Americas, as a means for promoting exchanges in the area of technical assistance and support for special and differentiated treatment.

Stages in the project:

- a) Gathering country information: *This is the basis for identifying strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities for technical cooperation with other countries.*
- b) Assessing progress in capacity building: (highlighting the five fundamental variables described in the project and identified in the Initiative for the Americas)¹: *With the information gathered and the field visit, it will be possible to measure the progress of the country concerned.*
- c) Developing a shared vision: *Interactive meeting of public and private sectors to reach consensus on actions needed to improve the situation.*
- d) Commitments and agreements on options for addressing and overcoming priority problems in the national and regional spheres:
- e) Documenting the experience and developing evaluation indicators.
- f) Implementing the regional project.

¹ (1) Mechanisms for articulation between the public and private sectors are actively operating; (2) Channels of communication between “capital” institutions and the mission in Geneva are operating smoothly and permanently; (3) Officials whose primary duty is to work with SPS at the international level have been recruited; (4) Decision makers define and carry out actions in the field of sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS); and (5) Priority is given to resources for continued participation in international bodies. (see document G/SPS/GEN/497).

Changes made in the project

In the course of implementation, some methodological changes have been made in response to the specific circumstances of the countries and to enhance the effectiveness of activities.

In this regard, stages one and two of the project, involving the information-gathering and assessment process, required a great deal of work to be done by the consultant and allowed relatively little time for gathering and analyzing the information.

In the course of implementation of these two stages, a suitable mechanism for gathering and analyzing information in two different stages was identified. It was found that information should be gathered by someone who was not only experienced in this area, but who was also familiar with the official systems of the country and its institutions. Accordingly, insofar as possible, the international consultant is being replaced by a national consultant or by members of IICA's technical staff (central, regional and national headquarters).

Although this has somewhat delayed the implementation of these stages, it will make it possible to obtain more reliable information and generate a more in-depth analysis.

Another means for improving the data-gathering process was the development of a tool for measuring Performance, Vision and Strategy for Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (Desempeño, Visión y Estrategia para Medidas Sanitarias y Fitosanitarias) known as PVS-SPS. This will improve the methodology for gathering information and facilitate standardization in processing it.

In addition, PVS-SPS will make it possible not only to study the five fundamental variables on which the project is based, but will also make it possible to expand the scope of the study while maintaining the institutional and international base.

Linkage with other projects

Project STDF-175, which has some similarities with 108, is currently being implemented in the Central American region, in terms of consultations and objectives. An effort was made to unify the consultations for this project and STDF-108 in order to avoid duplicating interviews. However, differences in schedules and, in particular, in the tools used for consultations, made it difficult to implement the two projects together. Consequently, it was decided to keep the two processes separate so as not to unduly burden or confuse the officials concerned in the public and private sectors. This entailed changing the schedule of events throughout the Central American countries and Panama. Nevertheless, the results obtained from both projects are compatible and can be used as verification indicators, given their similarities.

While Project STDF-108 focuses mainly on institutions, Project 175 is broader in scope, so it will be important to articulate the results and follow-up for both.

Information gathered in the countries

The use of PVS has made it possible to quantify development levels in respect of the different variables involved in SPS management. The consultations carried out in the countries allowed for a quantification of development levels for the five fundamental variables.

Information on the five fundamental variables is currently available for the 28 countries that took part in the Initiative for the Americas (annex 2), as well as PVS information for Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Paraguay, Dominican Republic and Costa Rica.

This information had been added to the general information on normative, commercial, technical and sanitary aspects, which will be the basis for strategic planning at the meetings on shared vision.

Annex 1 provides an example of quantified information for one of the countries to which the PVS tool was applied. This information is coupled with a series of comments from different public-sector institutions and private consultants. Consequently, the differences or similarities of replies make it possible to confirm the development level identified.

The information gathered will be classified, and at the meeting on shared vision, a strategic planning matrix will be designed to set up a national agenda for SPS work, as follows:

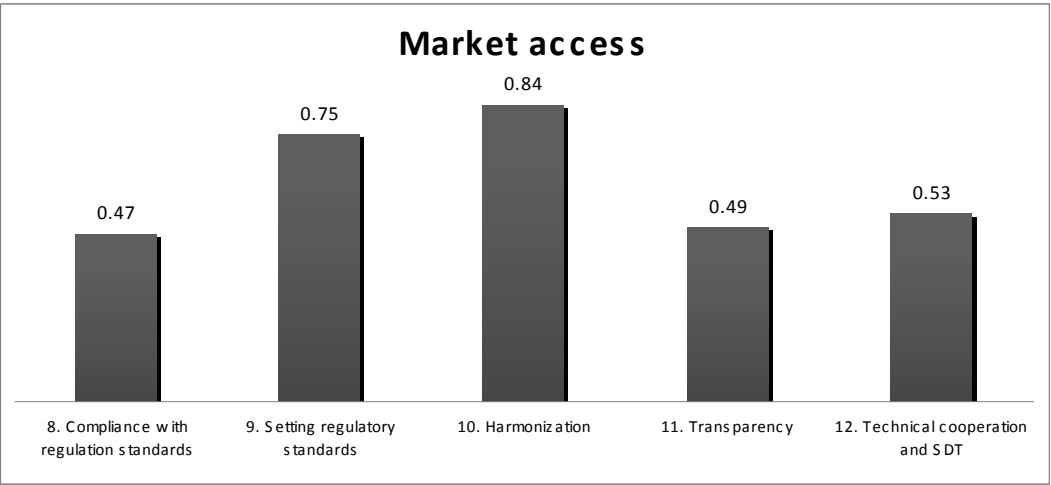
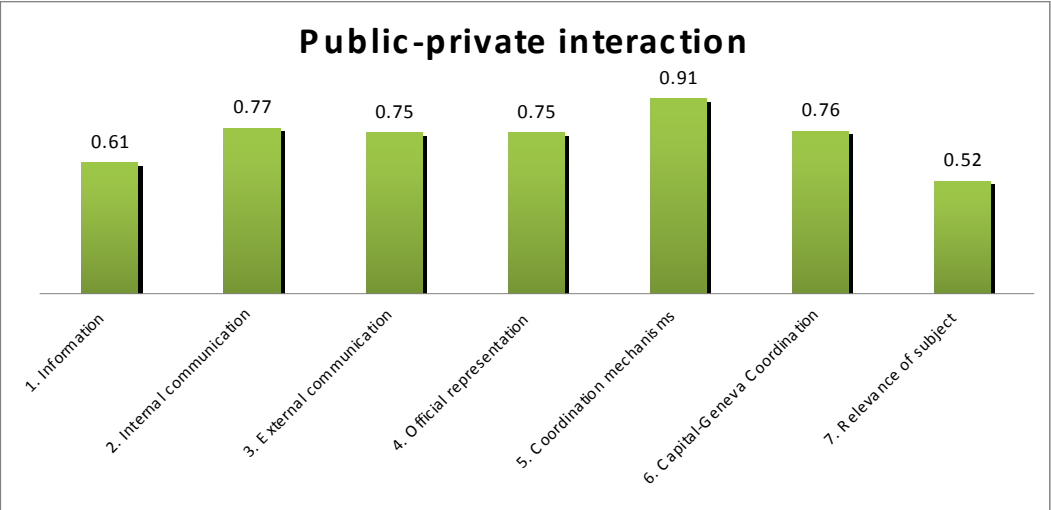
Planning matrix

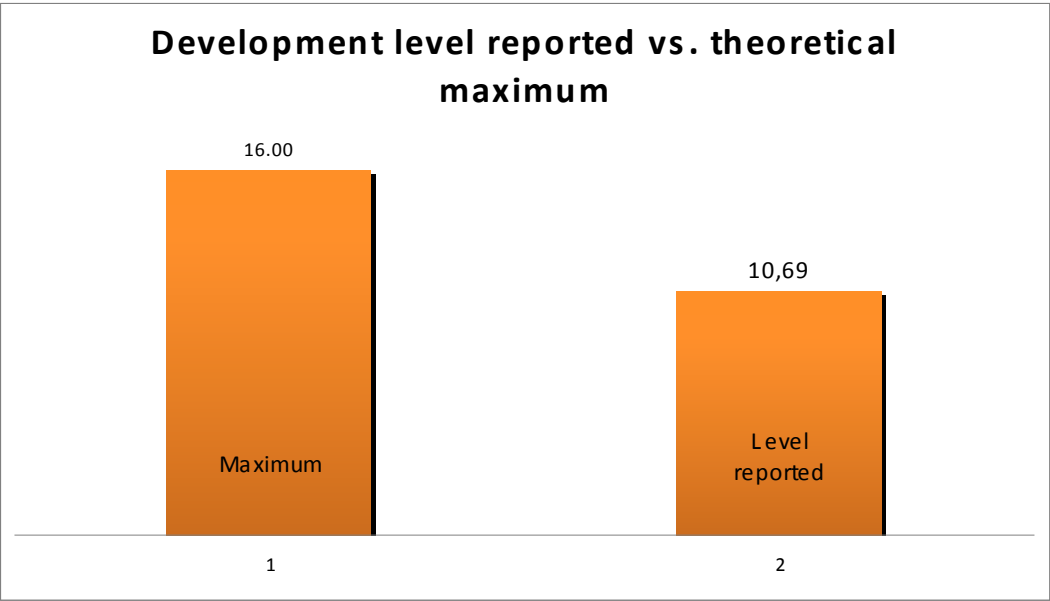
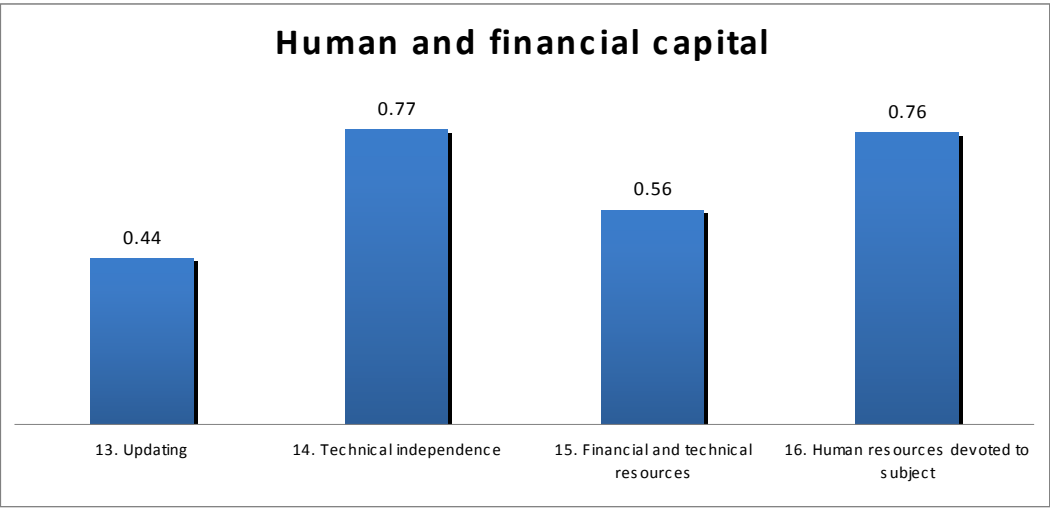
Strategy line	Actions	Expected results	Indicators of achievement	Persons responsible and participants	Timetable or completion date
L1	A1	R1	I1	R – P	
L2	A2	R2	I2	R – P	
L3	A3	R3	I3	R – P	
Ln	An	Rn	In	R – P	

The information gathered cannot be submitted until the process is completed and the countries decide on authorized distribution levels.

Annex 1

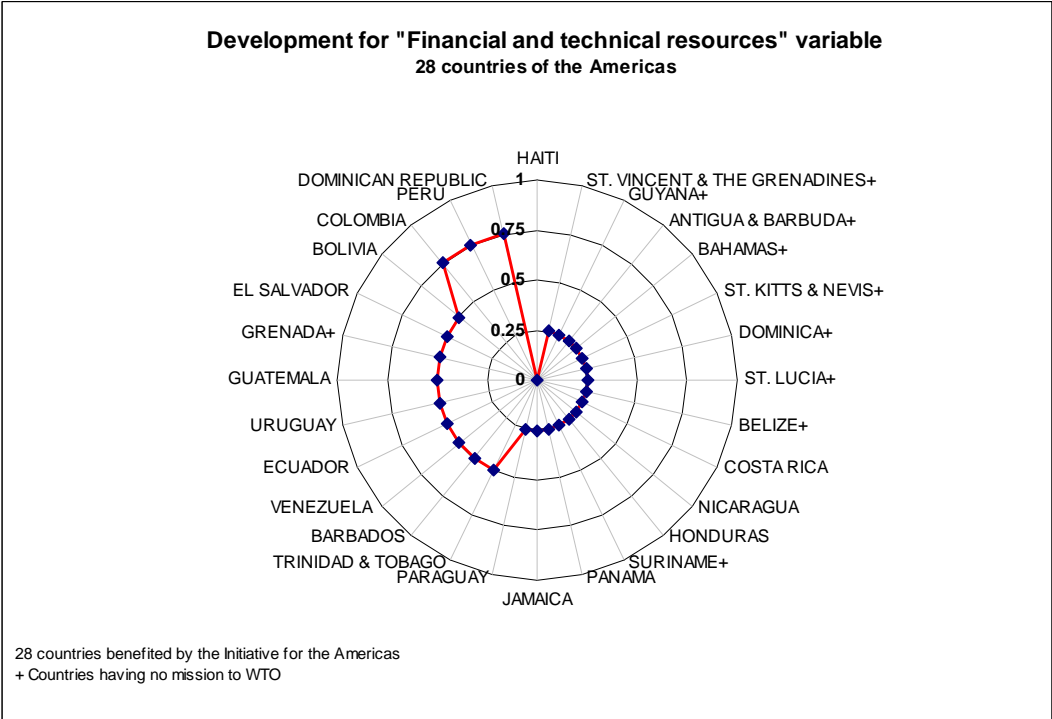
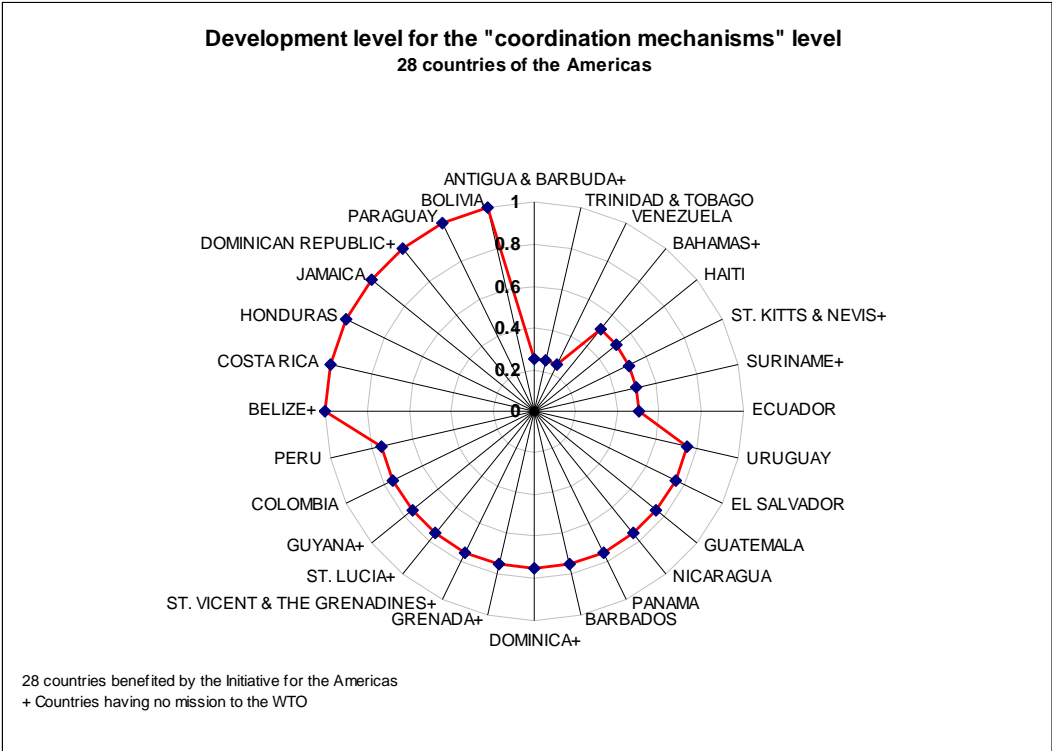
Example of information gathered from a country by using PVS



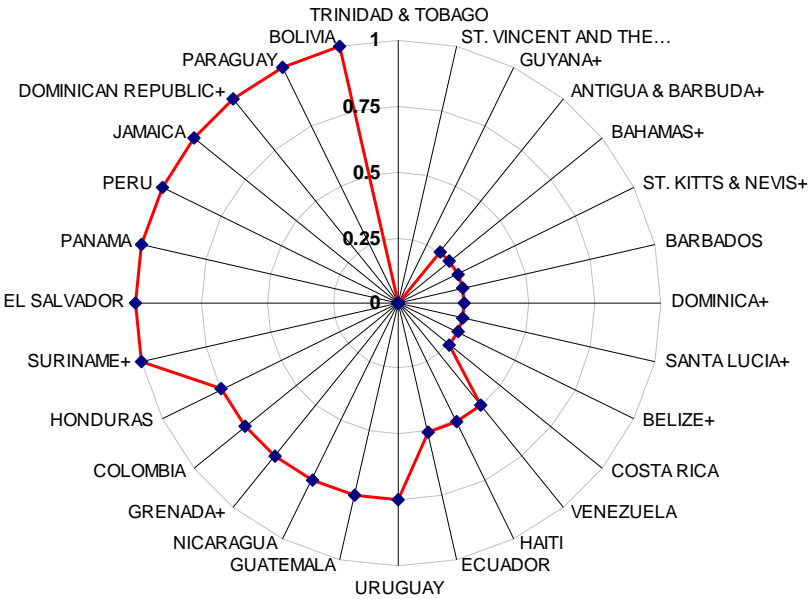


Annex 2

Information on the 5 fundamental variables obtained in the SPS Initiative for the Americas

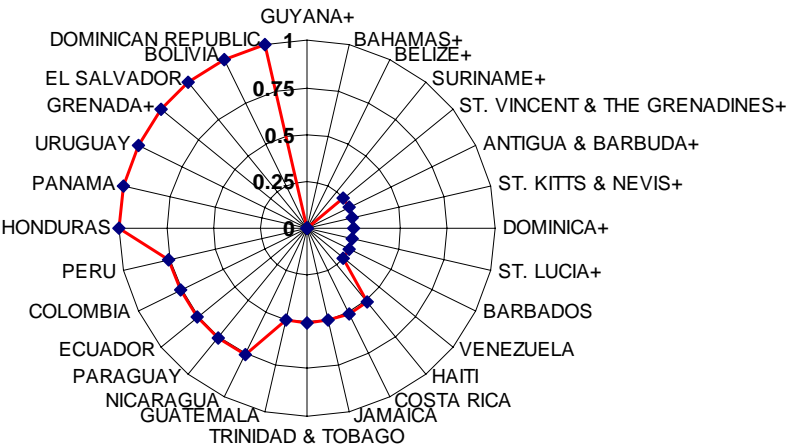


Development level for the "Available human resources" variable
28 countries of the Americas



28 countries benefited by the Initiative for the Americas
+ Countries having no mission to the WTO

Development level for "Capital-Geneva coordination" level
28 countries of the Americas



28 countries benefited by the Initiative for the Americas
+ Countries having no mission to WTO

