

Independent Evaluation of Biosecurity Strengthening Project in Timor-Leste

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Prepared by: East Timor Program

Approved by: Vincent Ashcroft

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Aid Activity Summary

Aid Activity Name	Biosecurity Strengthening Project (BSP) in Timor-Leste		
AidWorks initiative number	INH054		
Commencement date	1 June 2007	Completion date	31 December 2011 (extended to 30 June 2012)
Total Australian \$	\$5,665,000		
Total other \$	Partner government contributed staff and other resources but this has not been quantified.		
Delivery organisation	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)		
Implementing Partner	Timor-Leste Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF)		
Country/Region	Timor-Leste (East Timor)		
Primary Sector	Rural Development (animal agriculture)/Health (emerging infectious diseases)		

Aid Activity Objective:

The overall goal of the BSP is to contribute to rural development and livestock health and production in Timor-Leste in coordination with international efforts to prevent and control Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) and emerging infectious diseases (EIDs).

The original Project Document (for the period June 2007 to June 2010) included seven objectives:

- Promote effective project management and timely implementation of capacity building, technical, management and financial activities.
- Increase knowledge and awareness of poultry and pig health and production, HPAI and EIDs prevention and control.
- Enhance active and passive disease surveillance, and quarantine and disease response to HPAI, EIDs and other killer diseases of livestock.
- Improve poultry and pig health and husbandry at the household level.
- Facilitate the design and establishment of an appropriate laboratory and capacity building program for laboratory staff.
- Draft appropriate animal health legislation that will support the efficient prevention and control of livestock disease.
- Conduct research and development associated with HPAI and EID prevention and control.

The scope of Phase 2 of the Project (July 2010 to December 2011) was narrower, focusing almost entirely on capacity building and specific animal health activities, including:

- Development of a functional diagnostic veterinary laboratory
- Training veterinary and technical laboratory personnel

- Improving capacity of MAF veterinary personnel to undertake disease surveillance
- Implementing disease reporting (passive surveillance)
- Undertaking epidemiological mapping of livestock diseases
- Training National University of Timor-Leste (UNTL) students in animal health related disciplines
- Some continuing communication and awareness activities.

Independent Evaluation Summary

Evaluation Objective: To provide, for the considerations of the Government of Timor-Leste (GoTL), the Australian Government and FAO:

- i. conclusions about the project achievements;
- ii. recommendations about any additional short-term activities required to promote the sustainability of the outcomes from the BSP, in particular the veterinary laboratory; and
- iii. lessons learned for future development of EID management and biosecurity in the country.

Evaluation Completion Date: 2 November 2011

Evaluation Team: Dr Tony Foreman, Animal health specialist

Management Response

The evaluation of the BSP was managed by FAO based on Terms of Reference that were developed in consultation with AusAID. AusAID and the Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) were among the stakeholders consulted during the evaluation mission. AusAID considers the evaluation to be of adequate quality for a project of this size and scope.

The evaluation found that the BSP was overly ambitious in its scope and that the expectation of impacts on agricultural production within the project timeframes was unrealistic. The BSP has enhanced the capacity of MAF personnel and provided MAF with a useful asset in the veterinary laboratory. However, the project's achievements were limited in part by low absorptive capacity and by lower than expected contributions by GoTL. The sustainability of the veterinary laboratory is fragile and will depend on GoTL financial commitments and external assistance.

AusAID supports the recommendations of the evaluation which are intended to promote the sustainability of selected project outcomes. Consistent with priorities identified in the Australia-Timor-Leste *Strategic Planning Agreement for Development* and the pressing need to consolidate its country program into a smaller number of larger activities, AusAID has been open in its intention not to support any further phase of the BSP. This position is reflected in the evaluation report. Following the evaluation of the BSP, AusAID will focus on facilitating limited additional assistance from Australian Government agencies to promote the sustainability of the veterinary laboratory, including by building linkages with similar facilities in Australia.

FAO published its own management response to the evaluation in November 2011 (attached). AusAID endorses this response and the actions proposed or already taken by FAO.

Key lessons from the BSP evaluation for other AusAID activities in Timor-Leste and elsewhere include:

- Objectives need to be realistic given the level of donor resources, timeframes, initial capacity, and likely partner government resources. While it is often useful to set medium- to long-term objectives, these need to be supported by achievable intermediate outcomes/objectives.
- Partner government financial and staffing contributions are essential to the success of most activities, particularly those that aim to build capacity or require commitments to maintain assets beyond the term of the activity. While it is often difficult to obtain firm commitments before the commencement of an activity, commitment needs to be built over time. Donors need to be realistic about the fiscal constraints facing partner agencies and to support these agencies to obtain the budget allocations needed to meet shared objectives.
- Technical solutions (including physical assets and new systems) need to be appropriate for the medium- to long-term needs and capacity of a partner country, as well as short-term demands. Periodic utilisation of more sophisticated systems and facilities in other countries should be considered as part of Timor-Leste's (and other small countries') approach to a range of issues.

- Where activities are implemented by multilateral agencies with a limited in-country presence, adequate support from headquarters or regional offices is essential. AusAID needs to actively monitor the adequacy of in-country and other resources applied to multilateral activities.

Recommendation One

Recommendation: FAO should encourage MAF to urgently consider recurrent budget needs for the veterinary services, particularly for the maintenance and operation of the veterinary laboratory.

Response: Agree.

FAO accepted this recommendation but noted that discussion with MAF during the evaluation indicated that a reduced budget in 2012 would make it difficult to allocate the necessary funds. FAO have undertaken to continue raising the issue of recurrent funding in Project Coordination Committee meetings and other available forums.

MAF may need support to obtain the necessary additional budget allocations which may be beyond the capacity of FAO.

Actions: FAO has primary responsibility for implementing this recommendation. AusAID will support FAO by advocating appropriate recurrent budget allocations for MAF biosecurity functions, including the veterinary laboratory, through its relationships with MAF and the Ministry of Finance.

Recommendation Two

Recommendation: A six-month no-cost extension to the Project should be sought from AusAID, to enable continued operational support to Project activities until June 2012.

Response: Agree.

The BSP has unexpended funds and, as outlined in the evaluation report, a no-cost extension will help to promote the sustainability of project outcomes.

Actions: AusAID agreed to a no-cost extension of the project to 30 June 2012 on 22 December 2011.

Recommendation Three

Recommendation: FAO should explore with MAF options for continuing support to MAF livestock services, possibly including policy and strategy development.

Response: Agree in-principle.

FAO and MAF are free to consider further FAO support to MAF livestock services. However, AusAID does not intend to fund any further FAO projects in this sub-sector.

Aside from the possible support envisaged under Recommendation 4 (below), Australian support to MAF will consist largely of the Seeds of Life program which began a third five-year phase in January 2011 with \$25 million in joint funding from AusAID and the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research.

Actions: FAO is responsible for implementing this recommendation. No further actions from AusAID are required.

Recommendation Four

Recommendation: FAO should advocate to MAF that technical support be sought from appropriate Australian government agencies to provide assistance to MAF veterinary services, possibly funded through the AusAID Public Sector Linkages Program (PSLP).

Response: Agree in-principle.

FAO accepted this recommendation and will continue to advocate the need for MAF to collaborate with Australian agencies.

AusAID agrees that enhanced linkages with Australian agencies and veterinary laboratories will be important to promoting improvements in MAF veterinary services in general and the sustainability of the veterinary laboratory in particular.

DAFF is currently implementing two activities funded under PSLP:

- The *Animal Health Laboratory – developing a basic capacity* activity formally commenced in May 2010 and was scheduled to end in September 2012 with a total cost of \$250,000. This activity was

intended to complement the BSP by providing training (in Timor-Leste and Australia) to MAF staff in the skills necessary to manage and utilise the veterinary laboratory to perform simple diagnostic tests for key livestock diseases.

- The *Plant Health Diagnostics* activity began in July 2011 and is scheduled to end in June 2012, also at a total cost of \$250,000. This activity will identify pests and diseases posing quarantine risk and trade needs. Training will be provided to local staff to help develop a plant health reporting and response system. It was intended that this activity would utilise the veterinary laboratory. However, the evaluation of the BSP argues that it is not possible to use the veterinary laboratory as a shared facility for plant disease testing.

DAFF is likely to seek more funding through upcoming PSLP rounds for activities that complement and work with the veterinary laboratory.

The allocation of PSLP grants (to Australian Commonwealth, State and Territory agencies and public universities) is determined twice annually on a competitive basis by an inter-departmental committee. AusAID cannot commit to funding a particular agency or project through PSLP outside of this process. However, the AusAID East Timor program can provide standard advice to DAFF on developing a PSLP proposal (possibly involving other relevant Australian agencies) for further assistance to MAF veterinary services.

Actions: AusAID will distribute the evaluation report to DAFF and discuss options for further Australian support to MAF veterinary services during the first quarter of 2012. These discussions will initially focus on improving communication and coordination with FAO and managing the transition between FAO and DAFF assistance to the veterinary laboratory. Further discussions will consider the potential for DAFF to provide longer-term assistance to support the sustainability of the laboratory and its links with Australia.

Recommendation Five

Recommendation: Specialist advice should be sought to determine engineering requirements to finalise setting to work of the veterinary laboratory and to make appropriate arrangements for ongoing maintenance, including training and preparation of standard operating procedures (SOPs) for maintenance works.

Response: Agree.

FAO partially accepted this recommendation noting that an FAO engineer is already working to identify arrangements for maintenance, including finalising SOPs.

Actions: FAO is responsible for implementing this recommendation during the remaining period of the BSP. AusAID will monitor FAO implementation but no further actions from AusAID are required.

Recommendation Six

Recommendation: FAO should recommend to MAF that consideration be given to continuing the training arrangement with Bogor Agricultural University and with developing collaborative training and working arrangements with appropriate Australian laboratories.

Response: Agree.

The FAO response states that cooperation with Bogor Agricultural University is going smoothly and will be intensified during the no-cost extension phase.

Actions: FAO will recommend to MAF that it strengthen cooperation with the Bogor Agricultural University and with Australian laboratories beyond the end of the BSP. AusAID will discuss opportunities to develop collaborative training and working arrangements with Australian laboratories as part of the actions under Recommendation 5.

Recommendation Seven

Recommendation: FAO should propose to MAF that medium term planning should include expectations that the veterinary laboratory will need to be expanded, with additional accommodation having a lower requirement for biocontainment.

Response: Agree.

Actions: FAO will make recommendations to MAF and discuss these during Project Coordination Committee meetings. AusAID will monitor FAO implementation of this recommendation but no further actions from AusAID are required.

Recommendation Eight

Recommendation: FAO should recommend that GoTL consider proceeding with the drafted animal health legislation to enact it into law at a suitable time in the future. Restructuring of the veterinary services within MAF, for optimal efficiency and coordination of operations, should be considered at the same time.

Response: Agree.

Actions: FAO will continue to advocate the passage of this law but the law will not be considered until after the 2012 elections. AusAID will monitor FAO implementation of this recommendation but no further actions from AusAID are required.

Recommendation Nine

Recommendation: FAO should advocate to MAF that the most effective means of deploying scarce veterinary services in the medium term may be to focus on epidemiological studies to define the health status of Timor-Leste livestock, support livestock export initiatives and plan effective disease control initiatives.

Response: Agree.

FAO note that the current studies on priority animal diseases are providing valuable information and should be continued.

Actions: FAO will strengthen the initiated active disease surveillance on priority diseases. AusAID will monitor FAO implementation of this recommendation but no further actions from AusAID are required.