



African Union

Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources

SUPPORT PROGRAMME TO INTEGRATED NATIONAL ACTION PLANS ON AVIAN AND HUMAN INFLUENZA

SPINAP-AHI

**Fourth steering committee,
AU/IBAR head office**

Minutes

Nairobi / Kenya 13th March 2009



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I Introduction and opening remarks

Adoption of the meeting agenda

The Acting Director of AU-IBAR, Dr. Ahmed Elsayahly welcomed the members to the fourth SPINAP Steering Committee meeting.

The SPINAP team presented the draft agenda for review and adoption. The agenda was adopted without any amendments.

Opening speech by H.E Mme Tumusiime

The African Union Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture, H.E. Mme Tumusiime thanked the implementers of SPINAP for the work they had done so far and noted that efficiency and effectiveness were key factors for its success. She stressed that Member States had the responsibility to ensure that project activities were implemented as planned and the resources fully accounted for

The Commissioner reiterated that poverty was the greatest challenge facing the African continent and any projects implemented should be encapsulated into the poverty alleviation agenda of the continent.

She thanked the donor agencies for their support and in particular the European Commission for funding the SPINAP project.

Review and adoption of minutes of the last PSC meeting

The minutes of the last Project Steering Committee meeting were adopted as a true representation of the meeting with the following minor amendments:

- i. Qualify the activities of FAO on pg 10 number iv to include mention of its work in south Africa
- ii. Polish the language on page 9 number ii under countries with special needs to avoid negative connotation on with special needs

Adoption of the minutes was proposed by Mr. C. Hermansson (EC HQ) and seconded by Dr. Ojo Olusola, ACP secretariat.

Matters arising from minutes of the last PSC meeting

The matters arising from minutes of the last PSC meeting were as follows:

- i. **The no-cost extension of SPINAP**

Participants were informed that the no-cost-extension for SPINAP had been raised and was approved as recommended by the 3rd steering committee meeting.

ii. The mid-term evaluation of SPINAP

The delay of the mid-term evaluation for SPINAP was regretted. It was attributed to internal EC administrative procedures.

iii. Additional 3-million Euro to SPINAP

The committee recommended that the SPINAP team should proceed with a budget amendment to accommodate an additional 3 million Euro available to the program. This should be done through a rider to the existing budget and an accompanying addendum to the financing contract. If necessary, additional changes can be made later to incorporate recommendations from the MTE.

iv. Countries with special needs

Participants appreciated that some target countries such as Liberia evidently had acute constraints in technical and logistical capacity due to many years of civil conflict and required special consideration to support implementation of SPINAP.

2 SPINAP team presentations and discussions

Activity and progress report and priorities for the next 6 months

The progress made by SPINAP since the third steering committee was presented by the coordinator in a power point presentation. A printed copy of the report was also provided to all the participants. The challenges encountered, lessons learnt and future plans were presented.

A synthesis of the discussions that ensued is as follows:

i. Timeliness and quality of documents

Participants noted with appreciation that minutes of the previous PSC meeting had been circulated to the members in time and were of commendable quality

ii. Progress of SPINAP implementation

- Participants noted that despite delayed start of implementation of SPINAP, the preparatory phase of the project had been executed very well and in full compliance to all relevant regulations. They acknowledged that the delay was attributable to the time-consuming nature of the inception activities due to the wide scope of the project. It was further noted that time-frames that had been set at the beginning the project were rather ambitious.
- It was observed that the SPINAP team had made commendable progress in the last 5 months to finalize the signing of contracts with most of the countries and that the project had fully expended the first tranche of funds from EC.

iii. Strengthening regional approaches to addressing AI

- Participants agreed that there was need to strengthen regional approaches to addressing AI and other trans-boundary diseases. In this regard, it was suggested that FAO, OIE and AU-IBAR look into the possibility of working with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to develop Integrated Regional Action Plans on avian and human influenza.
- The regional coordination of SPINAP implementation through the RAHCs was explained and participants appreciated that greater engagement of the RECs in the coordination of the project would be desirable. It was however observed that direct coordination of SPINAP by the RECs had not been given strategic consideration at the design of the project but it was a good option to consider in future.
- It was proposed that SPINAP should use the opportunity of the additional 3 million Euros that was available to reinforce regional coordination at the level of the RECs.

- Participants were informed that ECOWAS was actively involved in addressing cross-border avian influenza issues and had recently been mandated by Member States to develop an international veterinary certificate for poultry and poultry products. The need for the REC to be involved more in the regular stakeholders meeting of the western Africa RAHC was expressed.
- Participants were informed that FAO ECTAD was working closely with the East African Community (EAC) on a regional program addressing TADs, and in particular providing support to establish and strengthen the regional animal health desk at the EAC Secretariat. It was pointed out that this would be a landmark achievement towards strengthening regional coordination of animal health activities.

iv. The proposed avian influenza directory for Africa

- Participants appreciated that due to the high turn-over among professionals involved with avian influenza, the AI directory for Africa proposed by SPINAP would require regular updating in order to be of any value.
- Participants further appreciated that before developing a data bank for Africa, creating a link with already existing animal data banks should be considered to avoid unnecessary duplication and create synergy.

v. Collaboration with partners

- The good working relationship between SPINAP and FAO ECTAD was noted with appreciation. Participants were informed that the two programs had worked very closely to harmonize their activities especially in Eastern Africa, and provide mutual technical back-up in their activities where feasible.
- Participants appreciated that WHO was a key partner of SPINAP. It was pointed out that WHO was a permanent member of the SPINAP steering committee. It was also noted with appreciation that WHO had provided technical support to SPINAP during its regional technical meetings. It was further pointed out that SPINAP had a dedicated public health expert whose role was, among others, to strengthen collaboration with partners from the public health sector.
- The plan of SPINAP to engage experts to address AI communication gaps at country level was commended. It was noted that USAID was already doing some work to address this aspect in some countries. It was proposed that SPINAP should explore ways of building on the existing efforts of USAID and FAO where applicable to ensure synergy.
- Regarding SPINAP's plan to strengthen the countries' capacities for wildlife surveillance, participants were informed that existing efforts in this field were disjointed. The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) was pointed out as a possible partner that SPINAP could explore working with in the planned capacity building activities.

vi. A tiered approach to capacity building

- A tiered approach to capacity building was proposed whereby the countries could be clustered according to levels of strength so that the stronger countries assist the weaker ones.

Financial report and budget analysis of funded interventions

The project financial advisor presented a comprehensive financial report. The report highlighted the progress in disbursement of funds to countries and SPINAP's financial monitoring tools that were used to track the countries' expenditures in relation to implementation of the planned activities. He pointed out that 6 of the countries that had signed their contracts had not received their disbursements due to delay in receiving the second tranche from the EC.

The presentation was followed by a discussion in which the following issues were discussed:

i. Transfer of the second tranche by EC to SPINAP

Participants were reassured that the transfer of the second tranche by EC to SPINAP was underway

ii. Transfer of the second tranches by SPINAP to the countries

Participants were informed that SPINAP planned to release the second tranches to the countries from the beginning of April.

iii. Underperforming countries

- The need to set timelines for termination of contracts of underperforming countries and reallocating the funds to performing ones was stressed. In this regard, it was noted that the SPINAP contract spelled out the right of AU-IBAR to reallocate the funds among countries. It was further noted that countries were expected to expend 70% of their first tranches within 4 months of receiving the funds after which they are prompted by the SPINAP coordinators to expedite the activities. Further push on this would be provided through M&E missions
- Participants were informed that by the end of May-June the project would have started identifying the underperforming countries and a list would be generated for presentation in the next steering committee.
- Regarding the countries that had not yet had their contracts signed, it was clarified that SPINAP had set a deadline to have all contracts signed by the end of April 2009 and had put in place mechanisms for intensive follow-up of all countries to hasten the signing of the contracts.
- It was proposed that a criterion for underperformance should be developed using information obtained from intensive monitoring and evaluation of the project in the countries so as to take into account the scenarios in different countries.

- It was also proposed that SPINAP should involve the RECs in addressing the issues of underperforming countries and ensure that they were fully in the picture before a decision is made to re-allocate the funds allocated to any country

Governance and control mechanisms of SPINAP

The presenter highlighted the institutional context in which SPINAP operates noting that the AUC was undergoing positive structural reforms that would provide a new framework for better project management. He noted that SPINAP was unique in many ways and particularly in its wide scope and the nature of contractual obligations and financial responsibilities it conferred to AU-IBAR. A number of tools and strategies were emphasized to demonstrate the arrangements put in place to assure proper implementation of the program.

The key issues that were discussed following the presentation are as follows:

i. The positive changes in AU-IBAR

The positive changes that were on-going in AU-IBAR, especially capacity enhancement and improved project management oversight were commended and appreciated as a furtherance of the tremendous milestones that the organization had realised in the past.

ii. The AUC procurement rules

It was agreed that as soon as the AUC procurement rules were duly approved by the EC, AU-IBAR will be informed in writing as foreseen in the contract. AU-IBAR will then be allowed to use the AU procurement procedures and regulations.

The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system and tools of SPINAP

The SPINAP M&E expert presented the M&E the system and tools that had been developed for the SPINAP project. Results of pilot run of the system in 10 countries were also presented to demonstrate the system abilities. The presentation was followed by discussions in which the following issues were addressed:

i. The M&E and common livestock indicators

The development of the M&E system for SPINAP was commended and it was suggested that the indicators set up in the plan could be a useful contribution to proposed development of a common set of livestock indicators.

ii. Transfer of the M&E to countries

The need to simplify the M&E system and cascade its application to country teams was acknowledged. In this regard, the participants were informed that the SPINAP team had begun the process of building the capacity of national SPINAP teams and integrating its application to the existing M&E systems in the countries.

Countries with special needs and suggested support

A brief presentation was made of needs assessment and findings, on the ability of countries to effectively implement the SPINAP program. The presenter emphasized that the team felt compelled to ensure every country earmarked for support participates in the program, hence the need to identify gaps that may hinder any country and talking measures to assist where necessary. The presentation was followed by discussions in which the following issues were addressed:

i. Complimentarity of efforts

The importance of ensuring complimentarity of efforts in addressing the special needs of countries was reiterated. It was observed that the SPINAP report of countries with special needs mentioned the activities of FAO indicating that relevant information was being shared between the partners to avoid duplication.

ii. Logistical support to countries

- It was proposed that the situation in each country, particularly those with problems related to civil conflicts, should be evaluated before recommending appropriate logistical support.
- It was further proposed that assessment of the major means of transportation in the countries should be done before recommending the type of means the countries with this need should acquire.

iii. Technical support to countries

- It was proposed that the governments of the countries with acute shortage of veterinary expertise should be sensitized to allocate more resources to their veterinary infrastructures to ensure long-term sustainability.
- It was noted that capacity building of local staff was included in the terms of reference of the technical consultants that were proposed by SPINAP to assist the countries with special needs. This would ensure that the countries had a pool of trained grassroots people with skills to conduct surveillance activities at the end of the project.
- Participants were informed that the government of Nigeria had a technical aid program that it conducted each year. It was proposed that SPINAP could explore, at diplomatic level, if this program would be used to address some of the special needs identified in the ECOWAS region.
- Participants agreed that technical assistance for countries with special needs should be sought from neighbouring countries as much as possible.
- Participants appreciated the need to involve the RAHCs more in providing technical support to countries with special needs. In this regard, it was noted that the RAHCs were not adequately staffed to handle the additional responsibility. It was also observed that engaging the OIE and

FAO wings of the RAHCs in providing such support could require time for discussions between the organizations and possible legal processes that would further delay implementation of the project. It was proposed that SPINAP consider a suitable rapid approach to providing such support, including the possibility of recruiting additional technical experts housed at the RAHCs to enable them provide the required support to the countries.

iv. Decisions on countries with special needs

- The committee approved the 6 countries proposed in the report (Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Somalia, Comoros and Djibouti) as countries with special needs.

The implementing team was mandated to continue looking at the needs of other needy countries and make arrangements for PSC endorsement as may be necessary

The committee made derogation on the following:

- To allow countries with special needs to use SPINAP funding to address the human resource and transport needs that were identified to be critical for implementation of the project.
- To allow AU-IBAR to operate the SPINAP fund for Somalia (have a budget line for SPINAP Somalia operated from AU-IBAR)
- The steering committee recommended that the budget be revised to take into account the special needs of the countries approved.
- The committee further recommended the recruitment of additional technical experts to be stationed in the RAHCs to provide the required support to countries and make the necessary budget amendment to address the activity.

SPINAP work plan

The SPINAP work plan was endorsed taking into account the inputs of the PSC.

Next meeting

The next steering committee meeting for SPINAP was proposed to be held in October 2009 in Gaborone, Botswana

The meeting adjourned at 17:47 hours

3 Appendices

Appendix I: List of Participants

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Appendix 2: Presentations

Progress in SPINAP implementation

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SPINAP countries with special needs report

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Budget / Contract Status / Accounting and Performance

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