



Record of the Proceedings

Chairs: Jonathan Rothschild, Canadian International Development Agency & Shaida Badiee, World Bank

Thursday, 10 May 2007

I. Welcome Statement

Mr. Jonathan Rothschild (co-chairing in Paris) welcomed participants and outlined the objectives of the meeting: to review the PARIS21 funding situation and to convene a meeting of the Consultative Group of the Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building (TFSCB). Ms. Shaida Badiee (co-chairing via teleconference from DC) commented that both PARIS21 and the TFSCB are now very strong operations and that demand is very high among policymakers to continue their efforts to support statistical development.

II. Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted without modifications.

III. Funding and Donor Issues

The PARIS21 Secretariat manager outlined the PARIS21 funding situation, presenting the expected income, proposed expenditures, and funding gap for 2007–2008. He pointed out that 16 donors have contributed funds to the Secretariat, which is a clear indicator of widespread support for the PARIS21 agenda. He added that there are currently no agreements signed for 2008 contributions; however, discussions have already begun with several donors. He thanked all past and present donors for their support and for their patience in observing OECD rules for accepting contributions and grants.

Discussion

The Paris chair invited participants to present their current possibilities of funding the PARIS21 Secretariat. The following is a brief run-down of their comments:

- The World Bank representative remarked that the Development Grant Facility grant for the PARIS21 core work programme is agreed annually. Final approval for FY2008 (July 2007–June 2008) has not yet been secured, but the grant has already passed the first process of approval by the Executive Board. No difficulties are anticipated, and the grant is expected to be for the same amount as last year's. Disbursement will likely be earlier in the year than with the last grant. The representative noted that this grant is in addition to the two grants for the satellite programmes.
- The United Kingdom representative explained that the UK Department for International Development is notified of its envelope of funds in July of this year, after which there will be discussions. Not before August will it be clear how much or if at all they can contribute. Nevertheless, the UK representative asked that a formal request from the Secretariat be sent for financial support.
- The Norwegian representative announced that they intend to contribute the same amount next year as they provided for this year.

- The Dutch representative commented that they are very keen to upscale substantially their support to statistical capacity building (SCB) in developing countries. However, he expressed some concern over the Partnership's speed in achieving its objectives in relation to scaling-up support for SCB. He urged participants to explore how to make the Partnership more effective.
- The Canadian representative outlined the terms of the two agreements recently signed with PARIS21: one for the PARIS21 core work programme (1.5 million CAD for 2 years), one for Metagora (1 million CAD for 2 years).
- The French representative said that he must await the disbursement and final report from the current contribution before proposing a new one. With the new French government just now forming, it is at present unclear what the new budget will involve; however, there still exists strong support within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for funding statistical development. Like the UK representative, he requested that the Secretariat submit a formal request for funding, once the current contribution's final report has been submitted.
- The German representative explained that, as his organisation is undergoing a major restructuring process, everything is currently at stake, including support to statistics. Until his ministry makes a decision on sectors and budget, Germany cannot commit to any funding at this time.
- The Swiss representative stated that the 2007 contribution will be forthcoming in approximately two months. Switzerland's intention is to continue to contribute at the same level in 2008 for the core budget of the PARIS21 Secretariat.
- The EC/Eurostat representative revealed that they are now in a position to make grants to organisations that are uniquely placed to undertake certain types of work. PARIS21 falls into this category. He commented that he will soon speak with the Secretariat to explore how to disburse grants to support specific activities in 2008.

The Paris Chair concluded that, in terms of funding for 2007, the Secretariat is in a comfortable position. While there are concerns over the unevenness of funding, this situation is not too different from previous years.

IV. TFSCB Consultative Group

The World Bank representative outlined the background of the TFSCB and its shared vision with PARIS21: supporting NSDS design and implementation. The fund supports regional and global projects and can give out small grants (US\$ 400,000 maximum) with a length of no more than three years. Last year, the Bank requested from the Consultative Group the authorisation to lower the fee structure to enable a more effective supervision of projects. The Consultative Group agreed to this change, which has since been implemented.

As of 31 March 2007, TFSCB-II has approved 21 projects to prepare NSDSs and 28 projects in support of statistical capacity building in general, with 17 projects rejected. The fund is also supporting the participation of developing country statisticians to attend international seminars and conferences. Three such grants have been approved. A new web-based application for funding requests has recently been created. There is also now a Bank-wide system to generate performance ratings of projects, self-ratings by task managers. The monitoring of performance is therefore improving.

Last year, the Consultative Group decided that the US\$ 919,000 surplus should be channelled back into the fund, since there was no mechanism in the donors' systems to retrieve this money. The Bank's loan department has collected the money back from projects all over the world, and the donors will soon receive letters outlining how much is left over and formally asking for approval to retain the money for TFSCB-III. The TFSCB is at the end of its financing relationship with its donors. The current financial situation will not allow the TFSCB to finance projects beyond 2008. At the moment, almost US\$ 6 million are available for the TFSCB.

The TFSCB will be the object of an evaluation in 2008, which should be done in collaboration with the PARIS21 evaluation. Although the evaluators will have to be paid via two different sources (World Bank and OECD), it would be preferable to conduct the two evaluations in tandem, rather than sequentially. In

collaboration with the Secretariat, the Bank will prepare the terms of reference for the evaluators then share them with the Steering Committee and TFSCB Consultative Group to seek their guidance and comments.

Mr. Jean-Louis Bodin then delivered a presentation on the findings and recommendations of the Fourth Meeting of the Advisory Panel of the TFSCB Consultative Group. The main findings include:

- Increasing need to prepare NSDSs, now considered an important prerequisite for sustainable SCB.
- Internal Management Committee monitoring processes now represent a very effective mechanism.
- Decisions made by review board are clear and correspond to revised guidelines and procedures.
- Greater percentage of proposals is in line with the main objectives of SCB.

Some concerns were expressed over hearing the voices of developing countries and those of World Bank operational regions and enhancing the representation of developing countries on the Advisory Panel. He proposed a reorganisation of PARIS21 Steering Committee / Donors meetings to better address TFSCB issues and include developing country representatives' views. Among the other recommendations were that: SCB projects on poverty statistics be given priority over other non-NSDS projects, World Bank country offices be more closely involved in the supervision of country-level projects, the guidelines for applications to fund the participation of statisticians in international seminars be publicised, and a review of completed TFSCB activities be conducted and include an assessment of how TFSCB has enhanced the value of statistics across country and sector settings in the areas of policy, analysis, design, and poverty reduction.

Discussion

As the World Bank representative had identified post-conflict situations as a new issue for the TFSCB, the Canadian representative requested lessons from the Bank on helping these countries. The World Bank representative commented that one of the first phases is to assist the countries in building the capacity to prepare applications for support. The Dutch representative asked if this work in supporting NSDS has led to progress on the ground among donors in supporting strategies or in terms of increasing statistical capacity. He recommended that the evaluation consider evaluating support to statistics within the Paris Declaration monitoring and asked if trust fund managers have considered managing part of the fund at the country level. The World Bank representative responded that the Tajikistan project is a good case study, as it was supported by initial seed funding from the Bank then garnered support from other donors to fill funding gaps. He recommended identifying a lead donor in countries to push the process forward. Regarding the localisation of the fund, he pointed out that the management of many of the projects have been delegated to the economists within the country office, since managing from Washington is quite expensive. The Paris chair stated that the Canadian International Development Agency is providing financial support to the TFSCB and that he supported the recommendation that SCB projects on poverty statistics be prioritised. The World Bank representative called attention to the fact that within the General Data Dissemination System project in Anglophone Africa very few countries selected the poverty statistics module; it was assumed because there are other sources of assistance in this area.

V. Closing Remarks

The DC chair concluded that the TFSCB is on the right track and that this group needs to discuss more deeply the scaling-up of support then re-examine the TFSCB and PARIS21 funding situations. She expressed her belief that the statistical development community needs more funds like the TFSCB to continue. While it is clear in discussions that there is no appetite for creating a new major vertical fund, small funds like the TFSCB will carry a critical role in filling the gaps for countries. Issues to be taken into consideration include countries emerging from conflict, small funding to poverty statistics and NSDS implementation, and the participation of developing countries' representatives in international fora. The Paris chair closed by thanking participants and the French Ministry for offering these facilities once again.