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Capacity Building and Technical Assistance – New Approaches and Building Alliances

Dr Deepak Gupta
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
Government of India

The inclusion of Capacity Building as one of the major themes of this Global Forum Meeting reflects both the recognition of the urgent need for Capacity Building in the area of food safety as well as the concern of multilateral institutions and, hopefully, of developed countries, that serious attempts should be put into place for this purpose. Most of the problems and issues were highlighted in the excellent paper presented by Dr. Rios at the Melbourne Conference in October, 1999. Although much progress has been made, the basic problems remain. This paper would, therefore, seek to reiterate many of the things mentioned therein and also try to re-emphasize the context, constraints and the ground realities within which Capacity Building efforts have to be made and thereby try to introduce pragmatic and feasible possibilities in this direction.

An attempt has been made to address three issues separately, although necessarily there will be an overlap: national food safety systems (which is the most important area); Codex matters, and bilateral technical assistance (SPS or otherwise).

I. Background and Context

1. Developed vs. developing countries – Differing scenarios

In the developed world, the increasing introduction of intensive agriculture and animal husbandry technologies has made food another industrial product. Extensive distribution systems allow for rapid and widespread distribution of potentially contaminated food products. The introduction of preventive techniques such as HACCP is increasing and becomes more and more mandatory. Recall and market reputation become the deterrents rather than legislated punishment. Preference for fresh and minimally processed foods, the increasingly longer interval between processing and consumption of foods, the rising trend of consuming food prepared outside the home, and substantial sourcing of raw materials and products from diverse areas all contribute to the increased prevalence of food borne illnesses ascribed to microbiological organisms. Actual outbreaks in the recent past has led to heightened consumer demand for safer food. In a situation where most critical traditional diseases have been kept under control, it is no surprise that this consumer outcry helps make food safety a political priority. The market compulsions of the private manufacturer and the Government's priority coincide to provide both attention and resources to this area. In totality, therefore, the environment stimulates development of food safety systems.

Contrast this scenario with most developing countries. No doubt, most have pockets, varying in degrees, of similar developing systems, but the much larger picture is totally different. Producers are mostly small, whether in agriculture or processing, and in huge numbers. Distribution and consumption is largely localised though large volumes of fresh food is traded in traditional markets. Food habits largely ensure eating of cooked food, particularly in our part of the world. Food borne illness is a serious but often unnoticed problem. Diarrhoeal diseases are a major cause of morbidity or mortality. For the rural poor the most important question is of food security with malnourishment and micronutrient deficiency being the critical issues. Rapid urbanization has led to more and more people living in slums in conditions of poverty, often substantive, overcrowding, and poor sanitation. Here there is an increasing emphasis on purchase and consumption of food outside the family home through street food vendors and food services premises. Further, development at its initial stages without full ameliorative steps, brings in its wake many industrial and environmental health hazards. And most important of all there is lack of awareness of food safety and hygiene.

2. Priority to food safety in developing countries

It has been repeatedly said, with some justification, that food safety has not been a priority for developing countries. But this has to be seen in context. These countries are facing a plethora of problems and fiscal crises. Attention has been largely focussed in the last decade on economic reforms and liberalization. Social sector development has suffered. Education has always been seen as an economic investment and has been relatively high on the agenda of countries. Health has not. WHO has sponsored a Commission to examine health issues and their relationship to economic development under Prof. Jeffry Sachs of Harvard University whose report will be published in December 2001. The Commission is likely to recommend a minimum of US $30-40 per capita investment in health. Current expenditure averages US $4. Most of the increase must come through external assistance, because (a) national incomes cannot provide these amounts and (b) competing critical requirements can allow only limited increases in health investment. While developing countries must raise their public health expenditures to a minimum of 2% of GDP, substantial external assistance to the health sector has also to be committed. Priorities likely to be set out by the Commission for developing countries are communicable diseases, in particular HIV-AIDS, TB and malaria; dealing with problems of anaemia and malnourishment; decreasing infant mortality rates through improved immunization; and improving the quality of water. Where is the priority for food safety? Priority first to health, and then, later to food safety, is thus going to be a long journey in developing countries. We also have to create an environment which stresses the public health importance of food safety. WHO has designated Food Safety as one of its priority areas and this should be reflected in the proportion of funds it spends for food safety vis-à-vis other communicable diseases. This helps in priority setting at national level too.

3. Food Safety – A multi-dimensional problem

Unlike many other areas in health, the work related to food safety is multi-dimensional and is simply enormous. Sporadic efforts in different sectors do not create the critical mass. There has been lack of an integrated or holistic approach or a long-term view. Therefore, WHO/FAO assistance over the years has not always yielded sustainable benefits or created the multiplier effect, nor created the institutional network. Clearly governments have also not been able to make the most appropriate use of these resources. International consultants who have been periodically visiting this area have been largely prescriptive after diagnosing the problems. This is easily done. Few have prepared a country based specific plan. This is the hard task.

4. Emphasis on export sector

In the economy of a particular country, because of the compulsion necessitated by the demands of the importing countries, most efforts of developing countries in capacity building in the area of food safety, both in public and private sector, tend to get narrowly focussed to the export sector. Multilateral, and particularly bilateral, technical assistance also tends to move in this direction. Therefore, capacity building across the nation has suffered.

5. Progress

In terms of Capacity Building, therefore, little appears to have changed over the years. Much has been done but the visible impact is not there notable, there will be inter-country variations. This is reflected in the decade reviews of WHO. A WHO 136 country survey in 1989 had stated that:

> *"Few of these countries had adequate legislation, standards or regulations or the capacity to enforce and assess them. Most lacked adequately skilled staff, effective mechanisms for inter-sectoral action and adequate financing and strategies to overcome these limitations. Therefore, while the identification of hazards and risks in food is vital in strategic planning, the capacity to assess and manage those risks is a fundamental lack in many developing countries."*

The current WHO draft document on Global Food Safety strategy now states that:

> *"Many developing countries are poorly equipped to respond to existing and emerging food safety problems. They lack technical and financial resources, an effective institutional framework, trained manpower and sufficient information about the hazards and risks involved. The risks are especially great in countries where low national income coincides with rapid industrial and agricultural development."*

It is about time, therefore, that the issue of Capacity Building is seriously, separately and comprehensively addressed. The background gives the scenario in which food control systems have to be designed and implemented. Efforts towards capacity building and the nature/extent of technical assistance must also be seen in this context.

II. Strategy for Action

1. National Action Plan

It is now being generally recognized, therefore, that the first necessary step is preparation of a National Action Plan based on an objective needs assessment. This assessment would provide data to be used by member governments, and Capacity Building agencies to set priorities, make decisions about programme activities, and allocate resources. Very varied situations may be found in different countries which require different kinds of responses. This would also provide a census of what exists in a country in terms of institutions, their work and capacity and availability of experts and their expertise. This is also important in view of the need to follow an inter-sectoral approach since many departments would be involved. This will also help in prioritization because, given the magnitude of the food safety agenda, not all activities can either be undertaken or supported. Once the plan is prepared elements of it could be posed for bilateral assistance. But there would be an essential homogeneity in terms of institutions taking this task forward; common pool of trained professionals; commonality in manuals/training materials; avoidance of duplications of funds/activities/target groups etc. It will also ensure collaboration between funding agencies who otherwise proceed independently leading to disparate systems and disjointed end products, and ensure there are no piecemeal or ad-hoc contributions. It will allow various activities to be

undertaken by different agencies as per comparative advantage. It will also provide opportunities for support where alliances can be built. This would provide both tangible evidence of the commitment of a member state as well as a road map.

2. Strengthening of National Offices

Preparation of this Plan will be a mammoth exercise, especially for the larger countries. We must recognize that there is a dearth of technical personnel available in the National Secretariats which will be implementing and co-ordinating a plethora of simultaneous activities, many of them difficult and new. At a time when divestment and downsizing is the mantra of the day, it is not going to be easy to strengthen these Secretariats with more staff. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the Cell by deputation of a few short-term experts for a suitable length of time, and for sustainability, to identify institutions and to strengthen them. These will provide dedicated attention. Once the hardware and software required is put into place and some cycle of activities completed, these will acquire a momentum of their own. It has been recommended that WHO Regional Offices and FAO Regional Offices should have a strong permanent food safety team. We cannot agree more. This is an absolute minimum and these requirements are immediate.

3. Collaborative Projects

India has asked for World Bank assistance for Capacity Building in this area. The Project will provide some funds. Technical expertise and assistance would, however, still be needed. It is understood that in Vietnam, WHO is involved in a major initiative designed to strengthen the Food Administration (Ministry of Health). WHO will oversee and staff a collaborative project, funded by the Asian Development Bank, involving the finalization of a national plan of action, formalization of food legislation, enhancing laboratory quality assurance, developing standardized food inspection procedures, and establishing a system of food borne disease surveillance. This type of project may serve as a model for future joint projects.

4. Networking

For the preparation and implementation of the National Plan it is necessary to network various institutions and bodies. A proposed National Alliance for Food Safety Promotion in India is given below. The list is not exhaustive :

Scientific Institutions	**Professional Association and their Chapter**	**Trade Bodies**
National Institute of Nutrition (NIN)	Nutrition Society	FICCI/CII
Central Food Technology Research Institute,CFTRI	Association of Food Scientists & Technologists	CIFTI
Indian Toxicology Research Centre, ITRC	Indian Dietetic Association	Hotel Associations
Home Science College Catering Institutions Hotel Management Centres	Association of Catering Professionals	Sectoral Bodies Eg. Halwais Association.

5. Funding Imperatives

There is certainly a much greater recognition now in developing countries of the importance of food safety. The initiation stage appears to have begun, if both individual countries and international agencies commit more funds and proper and systematic planning is done. But it is clear that our discussion in this Global Forum on Capacity Building will become meaningful only if there is an external commitment to pledge sufficient resources. We suggest the setting up of a Global Food Safety Fund which will have a much wider agenda and provide the wherewithal to WHO/FAO to provide that kind of assistance which will make a difference.

III. Specific Areas for Action

We now come to some priority specific areas for action based on the WHO draft Global Strategy for Food Safety Document and the ten-point Regional strategy for the South-East Asian Region.

1. Foodborne disease surveillance

The absence of reliable data on the burden of food borne disease impedes understanding about its public health importance and prevents the development of risk-based solutions to its management. Structures and systems must therefore be developed at Sub-national and national (and regional and international) levels to survey food borne disease and at national level to conduct risk assessments and implementation of risk management strategies. This is a new area requiring assistance. WHO should help in the preparation of a project for selected countries on a regional basis and for the setting up of regional sentinel sites. India already has institutions looking into disease surveillance. We are also approaching the World Bank for a Disease Surveillance Project. Therefore, additional assistance in India would be minimal. Countries could be assisted bilaterally too. Successful Projects could be replicated elsewhere.

2. Laboratory infrastructure

For an effective foodborne disease surveillance system and, as a necessary foundation for good regulatory systems, it is essential to have a good laboratory structure. Unfortunately, this is a weak area in most developing countries. The Regional Strategy Document has identified the causes thus;

- Inadequately resourced in terms of funding, equipment and personnel.
- Lack of recurrent expenditure effecting repair of equipment and available replaceable materials such as consumables, columns etc
- Much stronger in chemical analysis – Poor in microbiological
- Inadequate quality assurance procedures.

Over the years, WHO, FAO and other agencies have provided a lot of assistance in this area in India by way of supply of equipment to labs and training public analysts and chemists. In many labs these have been well utilized. In many not.

Here also the problem is multi-dimensional and needs to be accordingly addressed. One view is that there has been un co-ordinated external assistance for selective labs largely in the export sector. However, instruments supplied are too sophisticated, difficult to work and maintain in local conditions and require expensive external help. Therefore, it has been suggested that a needs

analysis is required covering the appropriateness of the type of instruments, models, post-purchase maintenance, consumable use pattern etc. One way forward is to strengthen a few laboratories which are of international standard at minimal cost and use them as Regional Resource Centres for upgrading the quality of laboratories within a country or countries of a Region. They would also supply equipment, help in its maintenance, provide reference standards, consumables etc. to a selected network of labs. These centres could be both domestically funded and multilaterally assisted. They could also be used for Analytical Quality Assurance Programmes, as well as training programmes in analytical methods including GLP. A good example of optimum resource utilization through building networks of existing labs in the country, region and international level is the recent initiative of the IAEA, Vienna, (jointly funded by FAO and WHO) for various environmental contaminants.

At a more prosaic level, we are preparing to upgrade infrastructure in our labs through the Capacity Building Project. We are also trying to audit selected labs and prepare a plan for upgrades to lead to accreditation by our National Board. This programme could be assisted by donors and applied in many countries. Further, in times when instrumentation cycles are getting shorter, assistance for replacements must be considered, as well as introducing services for a fee principles.

Finally, special help is required for the upgrade of entire systems of certain labs for microbiological analysis in each country.

Another view is that developed importing countries increasingly require more sophisticated instruments and test methods. Therefore, there is a need to identify test methods which are practical and acceptable and do not require great sophistication in instrumentation. Once this is done, appropriate commodity assistance in kind could be given, apart from required software assistance in calibration, QA systems, SOPs, etc.

3. Good Practices

Traditionally, food safety has been checked through end product testing and culprits punished. This has numerous difficulties as the number of personnel available simply cannot police the market and punishment through complicated and time taking judicial procedures often comes to nothing. Increasingly, therefore, emphasis is on the preventive approach and to adopt HACCP principles and GMP, GHP etc. But for most developing countries these have been new concepts.

WHO/FAO have been generously providing technical assistance for training under HACCP. Both have carried out the training for trainers programme. This conceptually has much more sustainability. Consultants have also held HACCP Seminars during their visits. This appears to be an ad hoc exercise without much lasting benefit. Some countries like US/EU have also supported HACCP training activities, largely addressed to export areas. The EU is currently starting a programme with the Quality Forum of an important Industry Association. This will provide trained quality professionals but work is going to be restricted, to 20-25 SME's. They have built an institutional relationship with a well known HACCP training organization in UK. These partnerships through bilateral means is the kind of 'alliance building' which needs to be encouraged. Many Indian organizations both in private and public and export sector have also followed through, particularly the dairy, marine products, fruit and vegetable processing sectors. The problem is the huge and dispersed small and medium business sector and the larger unorganized tiny sector.

The approach has been seminar driven. Training has been the basic activity. We really do not know how much we have covered across and within sectors and with what success and depth. Clearly also activities are not integrated. We are convinced, therefore, that a National HACCP Training and Implementation Plan be formulated. This would involve survey of needs of different

sectors; identification of the current status of trainers, trained personnel. Sectors of industry/units already having undergone training, evaluation of implementation and an analysis of feedback; preparation of a series of Manuals, Industry wise on HACCP principles; revision of course/training materials etc. Simultaneously, basic GMP GAP and GHP norms need to be prepared for all sectors (big, medium, small and tiny) and they need to be incorporated in some form as guidelines in the National Food legislation. Preparation of these generic, and later more specific, norms are of great priority.

4. Communication and training

This brings us to the problem of dissemination. One of the ways we are planning to do this is to develop a network of Institutes to adopt street food projects, as well as innovative ways of local dissemination of information through meetings of representatives of retailers and consumers etc. Further, all this should enter the course design of all academic and vocational institutes, teaching/training food service providers. This will immediately make this much more accessible and spread knowledge down stream. A recent analysis concluded that Universities having regular teaching programmes could play an active role in speeding HACCP in the country. On the fisheries side alone there are 8 Agricultural Universities/Fisheries colleges in the country.

Whether it is addressing HACCP or training requirements of regulatory officials, or teachers and students in the network mentioned above, there are huge communication needs as there are thousands of widely varying recipients. To ensure standardization, quality and easy reach, it is time that modern communication technology is utilized. How many Seminars will take place? Therefore, we must organize distance education courses, both through the traditional way and through the Web. This is a promising new area for future work of FAO/WHO. I am sure India can play an important role in helping prepare such courses.

5. Investigational surveys

A necessary simultaneous activity would be conducting regular investigational surveys to monitor levels and nature of contaminants in food products. These have been largely laboratory based in the past and used for standard formulation. They now need to be more market-based and results utilized for all the activities mentioned above. Further, not only food inspectors but students of the institutions mentioned could be involved in this exercise. We are working on preparation of a plan of action in this direction. This could be easily supported.

6. Institutional strengthening

In many countries many excellent institutions exist who individually, and together, have a huge store of human, technical and financial resources available. These need to be brought into the system. It is not easy to build an all embracing food agency. Therefore, we have to strengthen these existing institutions so that each can play an important role in an identified sector or nature of activity. The only exercise required when the National Plan is prepared is to identify what strengthening is actually required. Assistance required may not be very substantial. This would also lead to development of intra and inter-country institutional networks. In fact, there is great potential for South-South co-operation in this area, which can obtain much greater value from a given amount of assistance. People in government departments come and go. These institutions as resource centres will remain. Institutional strengthening is crucial for sustainability. They will also then play an important role in Codex matters too.

IV. Codex Issues

1. Codex standards

The last decade has seen rapidly increasing global food trade and increased exports from developing countries. SPS measures have enabled many to access exacting markets and helped retain market access when entry requirements have changed. However, perhaps there is cause for concern. Lowering of tariffs and other barriers in developing countries are being accompanied by high standards and stringent requirements for food products in developed countries. So while their exports are threatened, those of developed countries are facilitated.

Since Codex standards are now benchmarks for international food trade, the standard setting process becomes critically important, particularly for developing countries. Most standards are being set based on requirements and information provided by developed countries. Technological developments are leading to detection of progressively lesser amounts of a contaminant. There is pressure to lower standards to those levels. Sometimes, these have no relationship with epidemiological impact and risk. Exposure assessment data is not always fully taken account of. Most importantly, such data from developing countries is rarely considered, yet standards become Global Standards. Doubts arise further when developed countries are seeking 'highest levels of protection' casting away the traditional concept of 'appropriate levels of protection'. This leads to the feeling that they are becoming non-tariff barriers and are adding great costs to developing country exports. The UN Secretary General had publicly referred to the cost to African exports of nuts to Europe because of the totally unrealistic existence of levels of aflatoxin of the EU.

Necessarily then questions arise whether developing countries are having their due say in the setting of standards and how can this be ensured. The other issue which arises is what is required to be done to ensure that these countries are able to meet standards where already set. This becomes the other context in which issues of capacity building and technical assistance have to be seen.

2. Participation of developing countries

Over the last few years there has been talk of increasing participation of developing countries in the Codex process, but almost wholly restricted to increasing their physical participation in Codex meetings. India has been arguing that while this is important, though largely symbolic, much more important is to address their ability to take part fully in the standard setting process, the greatest constraint to which is lack of effective infrastructure at national levels for evaluation of draft standards. No doubt the extent, manner and quality of developing country participation has greatly increased, but much more needs to be done. A recurring contradiction in the approach of developed countries is that while the problems of effective participation are being recognized, and only partially addressed or remedied, the agenda is growing every day with increased sophistication and simultaneously attempted to push through on fast track basis. This is an important aspect of Capacity Building which requires assistance.

3. Involvement in standard-setting – Data collection and risk assessment

If countries are to be involved in the standard setting, data from developing countries and different regions has to be collected and incorporated. India has been repeatedly arguing this stand and Codex has accepted this in principle. The World Health Assembly had resolved in its 53rd Session in May 2000 that WHO make the largest possible use of information from developing countries in risk assessment for international standard setting. We, therefore, strongly welcome the statement incorporated in the draft WHO Global Food Safety Document which says:

"WHO will improve the methods of risk assessment for chemicals and microbiological hazards in food in order to provide accurate, Globally representative bases for standard setting by Codex. In regard to GEMS/Food databases, it will strive to obtain better data on food intake and on the level of contamination of food in developing countries to ensure that the risk characterizations provided to Codex are of Global significance."

This action brooks no delay. FAO/WHO's 'call for Data' or 'call for Experts' will not suffice. Data has to be collected if available somewhere in the system or otherwise generated. Assistance would also be required in identifying types of data, collection mechanism and documentation of data bases of both national and international standards formulation. This whole exercise, along with the risk assessment process, would itself be a capacity building exercise apart from generating the data.

We urge WHO/FAO to set up a Working Group of experts and representatives of some developing countries to explore what efforts at Capacity Building and financial assistance for generation of such data are required. The ideal mechanism is to identify Institutions in different regions, which will act as collaborating Institutions and become nodal points. These will be the same which we are proposing to strengthen in relation to domestic food safety systems. And it is experts of these Institutions which should be represented in the Group of Experts such as JECFA/JMPR etc. Transparency of experts lies in their being independent of any manufacturing interest not in involvement with generation of national-level data.

A necessary part of this exercise, as we collect the data, is a good hands on training on both qualitative and quantitative risk assessment covering chemical and microbiological hazards. Risk analysis remains an area of urgent assistance for Capacity Building. More seminars is not the answer. Dr. Rios had mentioned establishment of risk analysis units. We say put these in identified institutions. In addition Universities could be utilized. Training methodologies would need to change too – expert-supported practical applications.

4. Strengthening National Codex Infrastructure

This becomes an obvious area of action. India is currently implementing an FAO sponsored Project. This has the following elements:

1. Strengthening National Codex point and networking between all points which could be involved in Codex matters.

2. Developing information systems to access information of all Codex matters, Committees and countries views etc.

3. Harmonization of standards,/guidelines made in Rules under our PFA Act with Codex where possible.

4. Exposure to HACCP principles and preparation of training materials.

This project is well designed and is expected to lead to measurable outcomes; strengthen Capacity and capability to respond to Codex issues; identify collaborative institutes; identify and address needs /gaps in this area; and draw up a long-term HACCP education Plan. This Project is expected to give sustainable benefits. It is hoped evaluation of its successes could lead to introduction of more Projects in other countries. In so far as South Asia is concerned, these local experts and expertise gained could be used to help other countries too.

V. SPS Agreement and Technical Assistance

1. Sensitization to SPS/TBT Agreements

The SPS and TBT Agreements have completely changed the environment of international food trade. The first requirement is for developing countries to fully understand their provisions and implications. Over the years, WTO has held many seminars and training programmes helping in substantial improvement in this understanding. However, not many know the nuances of how it is operating in practice in different areas, or in what manner advantages can accrue to developing countries. Therefore, there continues to be a case for more detailed dissemination of the Agreements and their working. It is also to be recognized that there is a continuous turnover of personnel dealing with this subject in different countries. Therefore, this training must be institutionalized at National and Regional levels. Secondly, training methodology needs to change to include hands on exercises based on actual examples and prepared case studies. If developing countries are not taking recourse to this assistance then there seems to be some fundamental lack in communication. Explicit possibilities with some specificity of issues of different kinds need to be developed by some experts. Perhaps a consumer friendly Web based course for these Agreements such as the WIPO Patents course, would be of great use. A large number of people in bureaucracy, in institutions and in the industry and elsewhere can directly access and become familiar with this subject. We recommend action on this immediately.

2. Assistance under Clause 8 of SPS Agreement

Capacity of countries to respond effectively could also improve by collection and dissemination of information of the kind of technical assistance which has or has not been provided by developed countries under Clause 9 of the SPS agreement. There is too little information, or perhaps too little assistance. In this regard, it is a general perception that this Clause has remained at best an endeavor clause without being fully operationalised. India spent about US$ 25m in adjusting to a country's requirements on marine products without any assistance. The experience of India's Export Inspection Council of trying to incorporate such provisions in Equivalence Agreements has not elicited much positive response. We are also told that there are many cases of rejections even when processing units follow GHP/HACCP and inspections and certifications are done. This area needs to be separately studied and required assistance identified.

3. Information on Import requirements

Data is essential regarding individual import requirements for different products or sectors, or of individual importing countries, or specific international standards which are creating problems for developing countries. Data on standards; methods of sampling, inspections and tests; appeal procedures etc, could be readily made available on computerized databases. Further studies could suggest:

(a) whether these requirements or standards are justified;

(b) what would be the cost for developing countries to meet those requirements.

(c) What assistance SPS agreement would oblige that particular importing country to provide to the developing countries.

There are many experts or Institutions in many developing countries which can do this individually or in collaboration.

4. Equivalence Agreements

Another area is assistance in getting Equivalence Agreements on board. There is a serious difficulty in this area and little progress is being made in the direction of signing Equivalence Agreements. Equivalence determination is of great importance to trade facilitation. Therefore, some detailed attention has to be paid as to who can give what kind of assistance in this area. This is also desirable as it will directly link concerned institutions in both countries.

5. Bilateral Assistance

It is not easy to comment because of absence of information. The US/EU have provided a list of activities supported in different countries. They mostly relate to seminars by experts and some training. The EU has also indicated some activities which seem to go beyond workshops and actually are involved with introduction of SPS measures in different sectors. In both cases it appears that the primary emphasis is on seafood and fisheries and there are fruits and vegetables areas also. Therefore, these efforts perhaps directly relate to import of items of concern to these countries.

6. Approach

Discussions in the SPS Committee have shown that assistance:

(a) has been dominated by 'Soft infrastructure' like seminars.

(b) is fragmented rather than there being a holistic approach covering institutional, technical and economic aspects.

(c) is not co-ordinated.

(d) must be 'demand driven'.

The first step, therefore, must be diagnosis of the national situation to identify existing capacities and problems thereby identifying the best forms and medium of technical assistance which could be given by different agencies in a co-ordinated manner. This brings us back to the need for a National Action Plan whose part any Aid Project would then necessarily become.

VI. Conclusion:

The discussion in this paper leads us to the following conclusions:

1. While recognizing that ultimately each nation must take action itself to upgrade its food control systems, it must also be recognized that substantial financial assistance apart from technical assistance is required for Capacity Building by developing countries, though the nature and extent may vary with different countries. A Global Food Safety Fund be set up.

2. A national plan of action be prepared. This preparation would itself require assistance. This will be both diagnostic and programmatic and prioritize needs and activities. This will include a National HACCP training and implementation Plan.

3. WHO/FAO should become the coordinator at country level for all assistance and coordinate assistance, bilateral or otherwise, with the recipient country channeling this assistance on the basis of the comparative advantage of the donor.

4. Some continuous technical support in the form of experts is necessary at the national food safety control point to help in the above activities. Regional offices of WHO and FAO must be considerably strengthened by technical capacity in this area.

5. All proposed activities must eventually create Capacity Building by virtue of strengthening of institutions in a country which will provide the sustainability. The nature of strengthening be specified.

6. WHO/FAO facilitate data generation from developing countries for Codex standard setting.

7. Data bases of import requirements of developed countries be prepared.

8. For various areas Web based training and sensitization programmes be prepared.