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END OF PROJECT REPORT

FINAL REPORT OF THE MISTOWA PROJECT

SEPTEMBER 1, 2005 – SEPTEMBER 30, 2007

**“Strengthened Networks of Regional Market Information Systems and
Traders’ Organizations in West Africa (MISTOWA)”**

USAID Cooperative Agreement No. 641-A-00-04-00230-00

November 15, 2007

**This publication was produced for review by the United States Agency
for International Development. It was prepared by International
Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC)**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms 3

Executive Summary..... 5

Performance Indicator Table (End of Project Results versus Baseline Indicators)..... 7

Background/Context 8

 Project overview: goals, objective and intermediary results..... 8

Overall Goal: Contribute to USAID West Africa Mission’s strategic objective targeting greater trade competitiveness..... 8

 PIR 1- Improved market information generation and dissemination 9

 PIR 2 - Improved trader and producer skills 9

 PIR 3: Improved West African trade environment 9

 Overview of project activities, accomplishments and challenges by PIR..... 10

 PIR 1: Improved market information generation and dissemination 10

 PIR 2: Improved Producer and Trader Skills 19

 PIR 3: Improved West African trade environment 26

Documents & Reports Produced 28

 A: Project Documents 28

 B. Consultants’ Reports 29

Databases established 29

Lessons Learned..... 30

 Think regionally, but focus on activities at the national and local levels 30

 Developing strong and professional associations is key to increased intra-regional trade 30

 Three years not enough to attain any reasonable level of sustainability 31

 A great deal of enthusiasm for TradeNet as an operating tool 31

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ABIP	Agribusiness Information Point
ADP	Agricultural Development Project
APLS	Association des Acheteurs de Produits Locaux
BUSAC	Business Sector Advocacy Challenge Fund
CTA	Technical Center for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation
DMDA	Dawanau Market Development Association
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
FACIA	Federation of African Agricultural Input Trade Associations
FECAIDA	Federal Capital Agricultural Inputs Dealers' Association
FEWSNET	Famine Early Warning Systems Network
GAABIC	Ghana Agricultural Associations Business Information Center
GAPTO	Ghana Agricultural Products and Traders Organization
GHATAG	Ghana Haulage and Transport Owners Association
GIS	Geographic Information System
GSB	Ghana Standards Board
GSM	Global System for Mobile Communications
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IDRC	International Development Research Center
IFDC	International Fertilizer Development Center
IITA	International Institute for Tropical Agriculture
ISCOS	Institut Syndical pour la Coopération au Développement
MIR	Marketing Inputs Regionally
MIS	Market Information Systems
MISTOWA	Strengthened Networks of Market Information Systems and Traders' Organizations in West Africa
NAMIN	National Agricultural Marketing Information Network (Nigeria)
NAMIS	Nigeria Agri Marketing Information Service
OMA	Observatoire des Marchés Agricoles (Observatory of Agriculture Markets)
OPAM	Office des Produits Agricoles du Mali
PCU	Project Coordinating Unit
PIR	Project Intermediate Result
PO	Producer Organization
RATES	Regional Trade Expansion Support Program
RECAO	Réseau des Chambres d'Agriculture de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (Network of Chambers of Agriculture of West Africa)
ReSAAKS	Regional Strategy Analysis and Knowledge Support Systems
RESIMAO	Réseau des Systèmes d'Information de Marché d'Afrique de l'Ouest (Network of Market Information Systems of West Africa)
ROESAO	Réseau des Opérateurs Economiques du Secteur Agro-Alimentaire (Network of

	Economic Operators in the Food Industry)
ROPFA	Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et des Producteurs Agricoles de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (Network of Farmers' Organizations and Agricultural Producers of West Africa)
SMS	Short Messaging System
SOCAMAD	Société des Coopératives Agricoles et des Produits de Débe
TA	Traders' Association
TO	Trade Organization
URCEP	Union Régionale des Commerçants Exportateurs de Pommes de Terre
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WABNET	West African Businesswomen Network
WACSOFF	West African Civil Society Forum
WAEMU	West African Economic and Monetary Union
WAG	The West African Agricultural Trade portal (Short name for the MISTOWA Resource Center)
WARP	West African Regional Program
WATH	West African Trade Hub
ZADI	German Center for Documentation and Information in Agriculture

Executive Summary

USAID/WA awarded IFDC a \$14.4 million cooperative agreement in August 2004 to implement a four-year “Regional Market Information Systems and Traders’ Organizations in West Africa (MISTOWA)” project. Agriterra from the Netherlands contributed an additional \$1.4m to support the component of the project that focused on producers. MISTOWA aimed to increase regional agricultural trade and food security by improving and linking the existing regional efforts to generate, disseminate, and make commercial use of market information. The project focused on removing key obstacles to trade in West Africa including: i) lack of access to timely information on prices and market opportunities; ii) inadequate business skills of producers and traders to respond to production and market opportunities; and iii) unfavorable trading environment, including tariff and non-tariff barriers (e.g., harassments at the national borders).

In July, 2006, USAID/WA notified IFDC-MISTOWA of its decision to adjust funding levels of its programs to respond to new priorities and opportunities across Africa. MISTOWA funds were cut to \$10.4 m and the original end-of-project date was advanced from September 30, 2008 to September 30, 2007. This end-of-project report fulfils the contractual agreement and reports on the major achievements and challenges of MISTOWA.

MISTOWA made a great deal of progress towards attaining goals relative to improved market and trade information system in West Africa, increased intra-regional trade and strengthening producer and trader organizations at the national and regional levels. In the MIS area, the project partnered with “Busylab,” a private software company in Ghana, to create an electronic agribusiness information exchange platform, www.tradenet.biz. The platform offers access to real-time market and price information including offers to buy and sell via internet and related SMS services; in addition, the platform provides seller, buyer and service provider contacts, news and other information. In order to reach out to more producers and traders in the rural areas and distant markets, MISTOWA worked to create and improve 150 Agribusiness Information Points (ABIPs) throughout West Africa in collaboration with producer and trader organization partners. In ABIPs, producers and traders receive market information and training on how to access information via internet and SMS, as well as other business services that facilitate trade. Establishing these centers involved the allocation of \$US 1,400,000 in equipment and related activity grants, and the organization of over 300 training events or workshops to provide users and ABIP managers with necessary skills in ICT, MIS management, and business management. Today, essential real-time market information appropriate to producers’ and

traders' needs is available at any time, from practically anywhere in the region where MISTOWA worked.

MISTOWA also improved the efficiency of the collection and dissemination of price information by the public sector market information services. The work involved equipping and training public service market enumerators to use ICT. As a result, 8 francophone countries are now linked electronically to exchange data through a website, www.resimao.org. The Network of Market Information Systems of West Africa (RESIMAO) agreed in principle to participate in data collection and dissemination by setting up an automated and instant flow of flagged data between the RESIMAO platform and the private-sector managed Tradenet platform.

The MISTOWA project also worked on building producers' and traders' skills to enable them to better take advantage of intraregional trade opportunities. The support involved extensive training in various domains including ICT, MIS, and organizational and business management, as well as attendance at trade fairs. In addition, over \$300,000 was provided as competitive grants to support institutional development through the sponsoring of key organizational meetings (organization restructuring, general assemblies, etc.), trade exchange visits, commodity fora, and the like. Many partner POs and TOs have begun applying what they have learned by keeping electronic records of membership and commercial activity; others have undergone some restructuring, holding democratic elections to seat new officers as necessary. MISTOWA assisted the Regional Trader Organization (ROESAO) to develop a detailed strategic plan which defines value added services they wish to be able to bring to their members.

In order to address major impediments to intraregional trade, MISTOWA trained producers and traders from ten West African countries to advocate for improvements in the West African trade environment. Participants identified the key obstacles to intra-regional trade in their respective countries. Shortly thereafter, MISTOWA organized an important regional advocacy workshop bringing together trained PO/TO representatives from all over West Africa to discuss obstacles and develop a strategy towards addressing them. Country-specific advocacy plans were established and national advocacy committees have begun implementing activities aimed at addressing key obstacles to trade, namely road harassment, harmonization of input laws and regulations, and weak market information systems (and the need for governments to invest more into developing useful MIS). The national advocacy committees have formally been recognized as the agricultural advocacy organ of the West African Civil Society Forum (WACSOF) which represents civil society at ECOWAS Heads of State Summits.

The end-of-project target to increase the volume and value of intra-regional trade as well as other key indicators were largely exceeded one year prior to the original end of project year of

September 2008. Between the 2005 baseline and September 2007, the value of trade increased 108% (from \$305, 221,152 to \$635,479,004) while the number of individuals trained increased 1349% (from 46 to 6,252); see summary table below for more information on project achievements.

Performance Indicator Table (End of Project Results versus Baseline Indicators)

Indicator	Baseline Year	Baseline Year Data	<i>FY 2007 (End of Project Achievements)</i>	<i>% EOP Change over baseline</i>
Total annual value of selected products increased (\$) ¹	2005	305, 221,152	<i>635,479,004</i>	<i>108%</i>
Number of countries having compatible MIS	2004	2	<i>12</i>	<i>500%</i>
Number of users of MIS	2005	103,303	<i>196,695</i>	<i>90%</i>
Number of hits on partner websites	2005	117,085	<i>4,655,215</i>	<i>387%</i>
Number of individuals trained	2004	46	<i>6,252</i>	<i>1349%</i>
Analyses produced for regional organizations	2005	1	<i>2</i>	<i>100%</i>

In spite of these achievements, challenges remain at MISTOWA's end. The Tradenet platform must be promoted, more producers and traders must be informed of its utility, and ABIPs and TradePoints must continue to develop valuable business services and begin charging fees for those services in order to be able to ensure their long-term sustainability. The organizational capacities and other skills training are critical to ensuring a sustainable use of the Tradenet platform by producer and trader associations; therefore more training is necessary. In particular, these associations and their members need sustained coaching and additional technical and financial support to ensure that they arrive at full fruition – professional associations that truly can serve their members.

¹ Estimated from two sources: 1) annual value of trade of selected products from 20 trade associations supported by MISTOWA, and 2) annual value of trade of selected products voluntarily reported as business deals project beneficiaries made. For every business deal reported, we estimate that nine go unreported for several reasons.

Background/Context

Lack of access to market information has been a major barrier not only to trade but also food security in West Africa and elsewhere. Traders lack knowledge of the prices of goods, identities of potential buyers and sellers, and quantities demanded in neighboring countries. A great deal of information on market prices is currently collected every day at markets in each country by government or project market enumerators, but it is mainly used to gauge long-term trends for food security purposes, and it is almost never made public quickly enough for traders' needs, and almost never at all outside each country. Most existing inter-country trade has been conducted on an ad-hoc basis, with few records kept of prices and quantities, and little systematic sharing of information beyond word of mouth. Associations of farmers and traders exist within each country, but in many cases they are weak and poorly organized, and language and trust issues mean that there are rarely linkages between different countries. This has resulted in lower-than-optimal internal trade levels in many developing countries and sub-regions. In West Africa, for example, although the combined domestic markets for food and agricultural produce are US\$25 billion per year, currently only \$400 million is traded yearly within the region, compared with \$16.5 billion externally. While market information projects have been previously set up in many developing countries to try to remedy such situations, no ICT application had yet been developed specifically to support them. Many were using generic applications such as Microsoft Excel, or developing their own applications on an individual project basis. They generally suffer from major problems, including systems which were inefficiently developed or too complex for their intended users, and a lack of awareness of costs or revenue generation that led to financial unsustainability.

Project overview: goals, objective and intermediary results

Overall Goal: Contribute to USAID West Africa Mission's strategic objective targeting greater trade competitiveness.

Objective: Increased intra-regional agricultural trade through improved MIS and strengthened trader and producer organisations.

Project Intermediary Results:

PIR 1- Improved market information generation and dissemination

Aimed to add value to regional and national public systems to provide basic market information in a timely, accurate and usable way, and to develop private sector capacities to undertake supplementary functions that address agribusiness needs. Public sector information systems in West Africa generally do not provide the type of information that translates into increased trade. MISTOWA therefore helped stimulate private sector entry into the field by: a) developing a regional trade portal with up-to-date trade and business information accessible through Internet, emails, and SMS; b) providing assistance to producer organizations and trade associations to establish and run Agribusiness Information Points to provide services to their members; and c) creating alliances with rural cyber café managers and with other internet access or information centers (e.g., AGOA resource centers, SIGOA-TOPS focal points, and multi-purpose community information centers) to provide technical and trade information to users.

PIR 2 - Improved trader and producer skills

Aimed to make businesses more competitive so producers and traders can make more money. This was achieved by focusing on skills development. Major activities included: a) strengthening the organizational management skills of producer organizations and trade associations; b) developing producer and trader skills needed to access market opportunities through the use of the Internet, email, cellular phones, broadcast and print media; c) participation in face-to-face events where producer and traders can meet supply chain actors and make business deals; and d) training to improve advocacy and negotiating skills to facilitate business, remove formal and informal impediments to trade, and advocate for the implementation of rules and regulations in favor of regional trade.

PIR 3: Improved West African trade environment

Aimed at increasing agricultural trade opportunities by reducing external factors that impede trade, particularly those that affect the free flow of goods, services and people across the borders within West Africa. The present trade environment does not permit the free flow of goods and services and is hampered by tariff and non-tariff barriers, corruption, harassments at the borders and gender discrimination. Activities under this PIR improved advocacy skills of producer and trader associations, enhanced their effectiveness in addressing the road harassment problem, trained producers and traders on quality standards required by the market

and involved them in producing reliable trade data and addressing trade-related gender and HIV issues.

Overview of project activities, accomplishments and challenges by PIR

The following is a brief summary of the implemented project activities, listed under the various PIR to which they contributed.

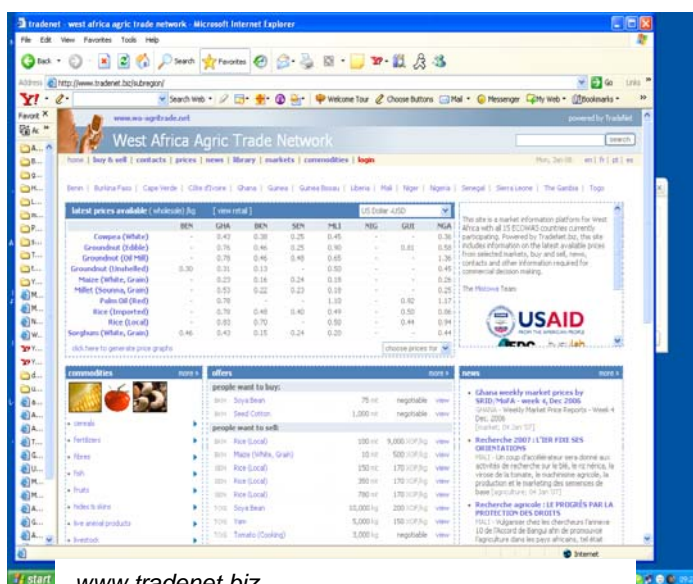
PIR 1: Improved market information generation and dissemination

Major activities contributing to PIR 1:

Activity 1.1: Established www.tradenet.biz, an electronic market information platform

One of MISTOWA's most outstanding accomplishments was the creation of the electronic market information platform, www.tradenet.biz, through an innovative public-private partnership. The platform is comprised of market information (i.e., real time prices, contacts, and offers to buy and sell) collected by both public and private sector representatives. Information posted on the website is available to any interested user at no cost. Additional functions allow users to receive from and send market information to the platform via SMS message at the cost of sending the message.

During MISTOWA project, the platform underwent several phases of development. Today, at MISTOWA's end, these efforts continue. Website developers continue to work on the site to identify and address "bugs" in the system and refine the website to make it as user-friendly as possible. Busylab is



www.tradenet.biz

also planning to integrate into platform content information on access to credit and is negotiating with Ecobank to determine possible linkages and ways in which the bank can collaborate to enhance producers' and traders' access to credit and ability to respond to market opportunities. Tradenet and MISTOWA also began negotiating with GSM providers in Nigeria, Mali, Ivory Coast and Ghana to develop a scheme whereby GSM providers would make market information

available to a large target populations via SMS. In this system, Tradenet would function as the intermediary information database, and partners such as NAMIN and individual POs/TOs would provide market information sent to users. Revenues generated from increased SMS usage would be shared among the GSM provider, Tradenet and the content providers. This scheme could go a long way towards achieving overall sustainability for this MIS based on the Tradenet-ABIP model and therefore, efforts are continuing post-MISTOWA to expand the reach of Tradenet through GSM providers.

Results for this activity:

- Tradenet was officially launched in Ghana (January 30, 2007). The launch was attended by over 400 people including the Ministers for Food and Agriculture (MOFA) and for Trade, Industry, Private Sector and Presidential Special Initiatives (MTI, PS & PSI).
- In general, Tradenet use has been increasing steadily. Some selected statistics as of November 23, 2007 were:
 - Over 5700 contacts registered from 90 countries, mainly in West Africa
 - 276 “groups” or “communities” registered
 - Prices received from 410 out of 564 markets registered (73%)
 - Prices reported on 178 out of 237 commodities registered (75%)
 - 765,000 prices received (350 prices/day)
 - Over 12,000 offers published by hosts via email or SMS to registered members (30/day)
 - 4,848 price requests made by users (7/day)
 - 51,659 SMS alerts sent out (79/day)
 - 2,911 agricultural trade-related documents loaded
- Other services available on TradeNet include contacts, news and a “ groups” option to create customized producer, trader or other “community” pages within Tradenet to share local and custom-made information among members.
- Negotiations with GSM providers in Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Ghana and Mali may be concluded by December 2007.
- Attempts were made, but agreement was not reached with RESIMAO to establish an automatic link between Tradenet and RESIMAO platforms to share information.

Challenges ahead:

- Need to promote Tradenet in other countries to increase content, number of registered users, number of SMS generated, and user satisfaction.
- Need to adopt a “push strategy” through the establishment of several market information points or “TradePoints” with “Trade Agents” operating out of kiosks or table tops in markets and rural areas to provide services of registration, content provision and publishing offers using cell phones.
- Need to integrate radio and TV as tools to promote the service
- Need to promote the use of the “groups” function as a communication and group management tool along the supply chain.
- Need to conclude negotiations with GSM providers in targeted countries and work out a system of profit-sharing with partnering content providers.

Activity 1.2: Assist RESIMAO in developing their market information exchange platform

MISTOWA worked in collaboration with ZADI to help RESIMAO conceptualize and develop their market information exchange platform (www.resimao.org). RESIMAO agreed in principle to set up an automated and instant flow of flagged data between the RESIMAO platform and the Tradenet platform. To date, although the principle is accepted the automatic link has not yet been established. In the meantime MISTOWA project ensured that information (prices) found on the RESIMAO platform was manually copied and uploaded onto the Tradenet platform. On average, about 50% of the data loaded onto Tradenet is from RESIMAO, but this percentage is decreasing steadily as more private MIS partners are trained and have begun uploading information.

MISTOWA has included RESIMAO partners and personnel when organizing ICT and MIS trainings. RESIMAO participation at these events (see Activity 1.5 below) has certainly influenced development of the RESIMAO platform as best practices and experiences are shared during these events.

Results for this activity:

- RESIMAO Tradenet platform is operational. Statistics on prices, tendencies, markets, map and SMS functions (set up alerts) are available via the website.
- RESIMAO is negotiating with CTA for additional support for the further development of the platform (CTA has financed the development of version 3 of the platform)

- The principle of establishing an automatic link to share data between RESIMAO and Tradenet platforms had originally been accepted but practical difficulties and misunderstandings need to be cleared for it to happen.

Challenges ahead:

- A formal agreement and automatic sharing of information need to be developed between Tradenet and RESIMAO.
- There is a need for RESIMAO to understand that the private market information system based on TradeNet is complementary to the public sector system servicing the commercial needs of users and should not be considered as competing with the public sector service.

Activity 1.3: Establish 150 Agribusiness Information Points (ABIPs) throughout West Africa and train ABIP managers

The MISTOWA project identified 150 ABIPs in 13 countries across West Africa. Given budget cuts, the reduction in the project period by one year, and the amplitude of the task of developing these structures to some degree of sustainability before the project's formal end date, MISTOWA decided to establish a list of "priority ABIPs". Priority ABIPs were



identified in September 2006, according to the host organization's level of preparation based on several elementary factors: 1) availability of office space, 2) availability of appropriately qualified permanent staff, 3) possession of IT equipment (computer, printer), 4) access to internet connectivity, and 5) whether the person identified as the "ABIP manager" had received necessary training on ICT and the use of Tradenet, RESIMAO and other useful MIS platforms.

Between October 2006 and September 2007, the resulting 63 "priority ABIPs" were monitored closely, were regularly receiving one-on-one technical support from MISTOWA personnel in the various targeted countries and were also specifically targeted for on-going technical trainings. In addition, several of the ABIP host organizations also received equipment or competitive grants to further support their development.

All 150 ABIP managers participated in several trainings to improve their ICT skills, to learn use of Tradenet, RESIMAO, and other available MIS platforms, and to develop their business skills that can be applied to ABIP management in view of eventual sustainability.

Results for this activity:

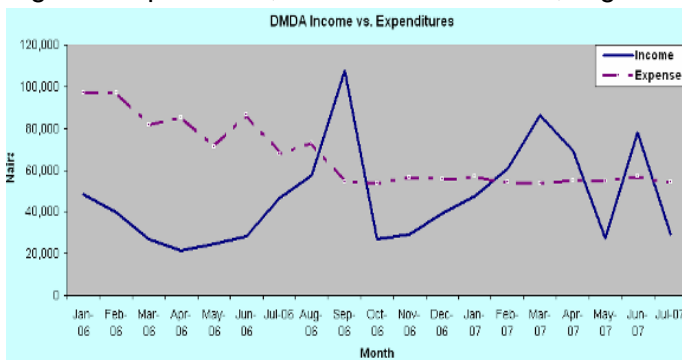
- Wide recognition of the concept of the ABIP approach and understanding among MIS partners in at least 13 countries throughout West Africa, and several other countries in Central and East Africa.
- A great deal of interest in the Tradenet-ABIP approach by several key MIS partners and donors in the region (IITA, IFAD, ECOWAS, UEMOA, CTA, etc.).
- The participation of IFDC/MISTOWA in the discussions pertaining to the establishment of an ECOWAS-wide agricultural market information system (AGRIS) for which IFDC has been identified as the lead partner in the Market and Trade Information Systems component based on TradeNet.
- Equipping 63 priority ABIPs at a reasonable level and availability of personnel and training to be able to operate as viable ABIPs. Three ABIPs now cover 100% of their monthly operational costs. Several others are generating funds to cover at least some of their operating expenses.
- The piloting of the TradePoint concept in Ghana and selected countries to extend the reach.



Challenges ahead:

The major challenge is the sustainability of the ABIPs established by the project and its partners. As a part of its exit strategy, throughout the project implementation, MISTOWA was putting in place mechanisms to ensure that its achievements are sustained and built upon after the end of the original project in September 2008. This involved providing constant coaching, encouragement and promotion of the ABIPs and the development of pay-for-service activities

that would make the ABIPs sustainable by 2008. Within nine months of its establishment, some of the ABIPs monitored by MISTOWA began showing signs of financial sustainability. Examples are the DMDA ABIP in Kano and Lagos Mile 12 ABIP, both in Nigeria. As shown in the below graph of monthly income plotted against expenditure, DMDA ABIP in Kano, Nigeria actually broke even (i.e., generated enough revenues to cover 100% of their costs) already in their eighth month of operation (August 06).



The DMDA ABIP generates income mostly from browsing, training and secretarial services while

expenditures are in the form of salary, utilities, telephone and consumables. Services provided by the ABIPs have become incentives for new members to join the associations that are operating these ABIPs. The graph seen below shows that DMDA's revenues from membership fees increased dramatically over the course of the ABIP's first year of operation.

Unfortunately, the pre-mature ending of the project has made it impossible to continue the kind of support that would lead to this type of sustainability with other ABIPs that are located throughout the region. The major challenge is therefore to find other ways of providing the support for additional training for ABIP managers and staff as well as to widely publicize and sensitize the public on the existence of the ABIP and services offered.



Activity 1.4: Provide equipment grants to public and private MIS partners

The MISTOWA project offered partners the opportunity to apply for limited grant funds to support the purchase and installation of MIS equipment necessary to carry out various activities to attain project objectives. At the beginning of the project (late 2004), MISTOWA established a standard grant application format, and set up a mechanism for receiving grant application requests. In general, the grant application process was as follows:

- 1) Country coordinators worked with partners and identified a need for support.

- 2) The standard format and application was completed and submitted to project headquarters in Accra (along with a proposed budget) via the MISTOWA country coordinator.
- 3) A grant review committee comprised of key personnel in Accra reviewed grant requests.
- 4) The MISTOWA grants coordinator followed up with applicants individually to request for more information, review in detail the proposed budget, and gather additional information and supporting documents if necessary.
- 5) If the grant was approved funds were either transferred directly to the receiving partner or through the relevant country office, and administrative procedures were followed to disburse funds to the receiving partner.
- 6) Grantees submitted both an activity report and a financial report justifying funds spent every three months, as well as a final technical and financial report at the activity's end, to the MISTOWA headquarters' office in Accra.

Results for this activity:

- MISTOWA disbursed a total of \$1,043,570 equipment grants to thirty-four MIS, PO and TO network member organizations from the public and private sector.
- Many ABIPs became functional and started moving towards sustainability of operations (i.e., with sufficient revenues to cover costs). Equipment grants were crucial to the development of many of the priority ABIPs.

Challenges ahead:

- Improving the ability of those associations that received the equipment to sustain it (e.g., maintenance) and to generate revenues from their use.
- Improving the ability to train members to use the equipment and other facilities at the ABIPs.

Full details of the grantees, their grants and funded activities, as well as impacts are described in the document "The MISTOWA Grants Program: A report on activities and preliminary impacts, September 2005 to September 2007" which has been submitted to USAID/WA.

Activity 1.5: Capacity building of public and private sector MIS

Capacity building of public and private sector MIS under the MISTOWA project consisted of the organization and implementation of several major events/activities such as:

Training workshop for MIS managers and IT specialists, March 10-13, 2005

MISTOWA and CTA pooled resources to co-organize a training workshop for 24 MIS managers and IT specialists from Benin, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo. Participants included communication and information officers from CILSS, ROEAO, RECAO, FACIA and ROPPA. The training focused on how to use cellular phones to upload and transmit data to their regional databases more efficiently.

International training on MIS and ICT – June 20-24, 2005, Accra, Ghana

Fifty-six participants from 17 countries attended this training which focused on the importance of MIS in increasing intraregional trade, sharing lessons learned and best practices from MIS in East Africa (FOODNET, RATIN, KACE), and also presented an overview of MISTOWA project goals, partners and strategies, introducing Tradenet, and discussing harmonisation and rationalization of data collection and enumeration programs, and dissemination of market information to various audiences at the required time.

Study tour to learn about MIS systems in Kenya

In October 2005 MISTOWA organized a study tour for a delegation of 3 E-Commerce Center officers working with the Ministry of Food and Agriculture in Ghana, 2 officers from NAMIN and IITA in Nigeria, and 2 officers from RESIMAO network affiliates in Burkina Faso and Niger. The delegation visited with the KACE, FOODNET and RATES projects in Kenya to learn about the market information systems in place, and participated during the First Regional Grain Trade Summit. The study tour was a key element in furthering ideas and ambitions relative to MIS in West Africa and helped in the conceptualisation of the ABIP approach now used by MISTOWA.

Support to RESIMAO regional workshop on “Adapting Information Collection Methods to the Evolution of Markets”

MISTOWA, along with ZADI and CTA, provided technical support for this workshop held in Cotonou on November 14-18, 2005. The workshop was attended by representatives of private MIS providers, regional trade associations (FACIA, ROESAO), regional producer organisations (ROPPA and RECAO) and the Community Computing Center of ECOWAS. Issues concerning the use of local units of measurement, harmonized methods of data collection, and analysis and dissemination were thoroughly discussed. During this meeting NAMIS was also added on as a member of RESIMAO.

International Francophone Training on Reinforcing MIS, Cotonou, Benin

MISTOWA organized a second International MIS Training as a follow-up to the first. This training was held September 5-8, 2006 in Cotonou, Benin. Forty participants were in attendance from targeted Francophone countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo. The workshop focused in particular on how to operate and finance ABIPs in ways which enable them to become financially sustainable.

International Anglophone Training on Reinforcing MIS, Accra, Ghana

The training described above was also organized for Anglophone countries on October 23-27, 2006, to 28 participants and resource persons from Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon, The Gambia, and Sierra Leone. Participating IFAD (PNDRT) representatives from Ghana, Cameroon and Ghana were particularly interested in MISTOWA's activities and accomplishments. This activity has led to on-going discussions and preparations to launch the ABIP approach with the Roots and Tubers Project in Cameroon (with financing from IFAD).

Registration of Nigeria Agricultural Market Information Network (NAMIN) as a company

MISTOWA has technically and financially supported the NAMIN as they organized all MIS systems and actors in Nigeria to come together to form NAMIN and register the entity as a private company. This is in view of harmonizing existing MIS collection and dissemination processes and enabling NAMIN to negotiate with MTN (a GMS provider) to establish a business agreement which would have NAMIN collecting market information that MTN would make available to the general public via SMS messaging. Profits generated in increased SMS use would be shared among NAMIN as the company coordinating the market information content providers (various MIS members), Tradenet, and MTN.

Training focusing on developing ICT skills and competency in using Tradenet, RESIMAO and other MIS platforms

In addition to the above, numerous trainings have been organized in Ghana, Nigeria, Mali, Benin, Togo, Burkina Faso, Niger, Senegal, The Gambia and Sierra Leone focusing on building the skills of public and private sector MIS professionals as well as those of producer and traders organisation officials and members. Skills targeted for development include ICT skills (using Microsoft office programs, internet and e-mail) and using MIS websites such as Tradenet and RESIMAO to facilitate trade.

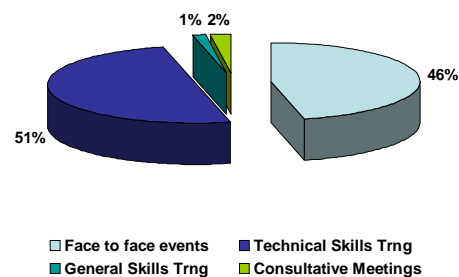
Granting of IT equipment to various public and private sector MIS partners

MISTOWA granted IT equipment grants totalling **\$US 163,917** to RESIMAO headquarter's office in Bamako, Mali, and to national affiliates in 9 RESIMAO member countries. The grants were used to purchase computers, printers, ink, and various accessories.

PIR 2: Improved Producer and Trader Skills

The MISTOWA project has aimed to improve both individual producer and trader skills to enable them to better respond to market opportunities, and to build the capacity of POs and TOs so that they are better able to serve and benefit their members. Almost 12,500 people benefited from major events facilitated by MISTOWA. Of this total number of participants, 51% received technical training; the second largest category was those participating in face-to-face events (see Figure on the right panel). Details of the major activities contributing to improved trade and producer skills are described below.

Almost 12,500 people benefited from major MISTOWA-facilitated events (November 2004 to August 2007)



Activity 2.1: Multiple trainings to improve skills of individual producers and traders

At the grassroots, MISTOWA helped plan, organize and finance (or co-finance) numerous trainings designed to build the skills of individual producers and traders. These trainings have been carried out at the national and local levels either in collaboration with ROPPA, RECAO, FACIA, ROESAO national affiliates, or with targeted individual POs and TOs. Trainings targeted actual PO/TO members (often along-side PO/TO management officials), and have focused on five major themes:

- Technical training to improve ICT/MIS skills involved 6,375 participants at the international, national level and local levels.
- General skills training focusing on various domains such as agri-inputs management, business management, and advocacy, as well as participation in commodity fora, trade fares and crop outlook conferences. Grouped under “face-to-face” events these involved a total of 6,000 people.

- Consultative meetings and general skills training involved 375 people.

Results for this activity

Although it is difficult to quantify the results of training activities since they target increased skills and capacities which are difficult to measure, we are able to claim the following:

- ICT training vastly improved trainees' capacity to communicate via e-mail and to use SMS to obtain price information and navigate the internet to research information that can enhance trade activities.
- PO/TO members particularly in the shea production and agricultural inputs sectors have acquired valuable technical information to increase production and improve performance.
- ABIP managers' skills and capacity to manage an ABIP as a sustainable business have improved.
- Producers and traders have collectively identified primary issues inhibiting trade in West Africa and came together at the regional and national levels to develop strategies to address issues identified, advocated for action and presented their recommendations before key regional authorities (ECOWAS and WACSO).



A producer organizations member browsing the trade portal in one of the technical training sessions.

Challenges ahead:

- Various new skills acquired by the trained producers and traders must be passed on to others.
- National and regional advocacy groups must retain their position as important advisors and partners in the development and implementation of strategies to address impediments to trade in West Africa.

Activity 2.2: Institutional development activities carried out with POs and TOs at the regional and national levels

MISTOWA supported the four major regional PO/TO partners (ROPPA, RECAO, ROESAO, and FACIA) and their national affiliates and individual POs/TOs to organize and carry out various types of activities targeting institutional development. Examples of these activities include: organizing general assemblies and internal consultative meetings to review organisational structure, and to democratically elect new officials, and review activities and progress; carrying out workshops to develop strategic and action plans for the future; and organizing trainings that focus specifically on organisational development and management.

At the regional level the following activities were supported to facilitate ROESAO's institutional development:

- ROESAO organisational meeting in Bamako, Mali, March 14-15, 2005.
- ROESAO representatives from Benin, Togo, Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso in a regional union forum held in Kano and at the 20th anniversary celebration of Dawanau market in Kano, Nigeria; May 23-27, 2005.
- ROESAO Annual coordination meeting in Accra, Ghana, on September 16-17, 2005. All member countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo) were present. Fifteen representatives took part in deliberations to review national and regional activities and develop strategies for sustainable operation of a regional secretariat.
- Three-day consultative meeting that brought together ROESAO Board Members to discuss various issues relative to the network's overall organisation and means of clearly defining their strategic approach to supporting agribusiness throughout West Africa. A representative from Guinea was elected to the Board during the course of the meeting, resulting in each member country being represented on the Board of Directors of the organisation; May 20-22, 2006. Bamako, Mali.
- Equipment, staffing and official opening of the ROESAO regional headquarters' office in Bamako, Mali. The official opening in Bamako took place on May 23, 2006.
- Strategic Plan development workshop attended by ROESAO board members representing all member countries. A strategic plan describing services to be rendered to member organisations and various strategies and activities to be carried out over the course of the next five years was developed and later finalized. The workshop took place in Kpalime, Togo, on September 6-9, 2006.

- Several ROESAO national platforms have been supported through competitive grants to carry out activities of particular interest, such as trade exchange visits, attending regional for a, and conferences.

Also at the regional level, certain major activities were implemented to support ROPPA's institutional development:

- Development and implementation of an \$82,000 grant allocated to ROPPA to support ROPPA CET and selected national platforms in 9 member countries.
- ROPPA-specific training workshop on market information systems, data collection and use, Cotonou, Benin, May 18-20, 2005.
- Sponsorship of various national ROPPA platforms to participate in regional trade fairs such as FIARA in Senegal (2006 and 2007), and Crop Outlook Conferences organized in collaboration with CILSS in Accra, Ghana (2005), Bamako, Mali (2005), and Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso (2006).
- Sponsorship of representatives of various national ROPPA platforms in many of the general MIS and organisational management trainings organized (see above) and which brought together a mix of partners (ROPPA, RECAO, RESIMAO, ROESAO).
- Technical and financial support to ROPPA as they organized and implemented the Regional Forum on Food Security in Niamey, Niger, on November 7-10, 2006.

MISTOWA support to assist the institutional development of RECAO and member Chambers of Agriculture included:

- Equipment grants amounting to \$67,490 to RECAO headquarters in Bamako, Mali and member Chambers of Agriculture.
- Routine inclusion of representatives of Chambers of Commerce in the ICT, MIS, and organisational management trainings that were carried out.
- Organization and financing of a workshop to train 25 key personnel from RECAO member Chambers of Agriculture (presidents, secretary generals and information and communication managers) from nine West African countries in organisational and information management, and to encourage them to become more involved in the collection and dissemination of market information. The training took place in Ouagadougou on January 23-25, 2006.
- Representatives of various RECAO member Chambers of Agriculture have participated in many of the general MIS and organisational management trainings

organized (mentioned in previous sections) and which brought together a mix of partners (ROPPA, RECAO, RESIMAO, ROESAO).

- Sponsorship of RECAO information and communication managers from member Chambers of Agriculture (Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Mali and Togo) to participate in the MIS training in Accra, Ghana, on April 10-15, 2006. Also in attendance were information system managers working on certain commodity chains such as onion, rice and livestock, and the MIS manager from ECOWAS. The principle objective of the training was to reinforce participants' capacity to make use of new technologies (internet, Tradenet, RESIMAO and other MIS platforms) to research market information and make it available to a broader public.

At the national affiliate and individual PO/TO levels, MISTOWA has supported many activities similar to the above which targeted institutional development in diverse ways. Many of these activities have been supported through competitive grant funds which individual partner organisations applied to receive. MISTOWA granted a total of \$373,980 to contribute to the implementation of 32 competitive grant activities.

In addition to specific activities supported through competitive grants, national affiliates of regional networks and individual PO/TOs have participated in various ICT, MIS, organisational and management, technical and business training events mentioned above and detailed in the grants document cited above.

Results for this activity

Institutional development of PO/TO organisations at the regional levels (ROPPA, RECAO, FACIA and ROESAO) can be summed up in general by the following:

- The equipment grant allocated to ROPPA was used to help ensure that each of the 7 national ROPPA platforms had at least minimum equipment necessary to carry out essential functions. In addition, ROPPA allocated some of the equipment to their national affiliates, so that they could upgrade equipment in regional offices within these particular countries.
- The participation of selected ROPPA platforms at various events helped gain exposure to PO groups in represented countries, putting them in contact with potential buyers and sellers.
- Inclusion of ROPPA, RECAO and ROESAO officials at numerous trainings, seminars, and other events led to increased networking and a broader understanding of the constraints and needs of various actors involved in intraregional trade.

- ROPPA and RECAO information and communication managers became aware of and able to use MIS platforms developed (Tradenet and RESIMAO in particular).
- Support provided to ROESAO led to the development of a solid strategic plan and corresponding action plans in the various member countries.
- ROESAO now has a fully-equipped regional headquarters in Bamako, Mali. A permanent secretary is based in the Bamako office, charged with maintaining communication among member representatives and providing coordination services

Results at the national and individual PO/TO levels include:

- As a result of both equipment grants and ICT/MIS trainings conducted, many of MISTOWA's partner POs/TOs, particularly those that are currently running ABIPs, have replaced archaic, hard-copy record-keeping systems (or no system at all) with electronic records documenting membership, payment of membership fees, commercial transactions, and the like.
- Partner PO/TOs whose level of commercial transactions were tracked by MISTOWA generated over \$US 584 million in cross-border trade in agricultural products since January 2005.
- Traders and individuals reported making over \$51m in trade deals as a result of linkages developed during MISTOWA activities.
- Producers and traders are now able to access real-time market information any time from anywhere via Tradenet and related SMS functions.
- Key members of several shea nut and butter production organisations in Mali and Burkina Faso acquired technical skills to improve production, thereby increasing marketability of their produce.

Challenges ahead:

At the regional level:

- Significant progress was achieved towards establishing ROESAO as a viable organisation offering valuable services to their members. However, ROESAO is still in need of a great deal of support in order to be able to implement the ideas reflected in the detailed strategic plan they have developed. The organisation also faces challenges related to their limited capacity to employ permanent staff at their headquarters office in Bamako, and communication and administrative challenges

- due to the fact that officeholders are scattered in various countries throughout West Africa, thereby making discussion, decision-making and implementation difficult.
- Although the equipment grant allocated to ROPPA helped supply national platforms with a minimum of necessary office equipment, many regional representatives and offices at the national level are still very poorly equipped, and many need organisational training and support in order to further develop the platform as a whole.
 - Regional initiatives are taking place at such a large scale that it is very difficult to mobilise adequate funds to address even very basic needs in a systematic and comprehensive way across countries. The challenge is to acquire the necessary funds to run a regional program and/or to coordinate a number of programs in individual countries that work as a team towards similar objectives.
 - Regional Chambers of Agriculture within targeted countries did not yet received much direct support given 1) the need to first develop comprehension and adhesion to project goals at the national level and 2) the extent of available funding to provide support at this level.
 - Likewise, support to ROPPA regional representatives within target countries was minimal due to the fact that planning project activities with ROPPA was a lengthy process. In addition, limited funding made it difficult to extend assistance to the regional level..

At the national and individual PO/TO level:

- Although MISTOWA provided equipment grants, many PO/TOs are still not *adequately* equipped to provide MIS services. Many are also not equipped to provide business services (photocopying, etc.) that could help make ABIPs sustainable. More equipment and accompanying training (organisational development, business management, etc.) are still needed to attain the desired level of sustainability.
- PO/TOs must begin implementing strategies to charge for MIS services rendered.
- PO/TO members/officials that were trained to improve their skills in various domains must in turn train their members to ensure that acquired skills are passed on to others, thereby leading to general institutional development.
- If producers and traders are to use MIS to facilitate trade, there must be a large-scale sensitization campaign which explains the link between PO/TOs, MIS and increased intraregional trade.

PIR 3: Improved West African trade environment

MISTOWA activities aimed at improving the environment for trade in West Africa focused mainly on improving the advocacy skills of producer and trader organizations at the national and regional levels. In addition, MISTOWA co-financed and sponsored PO/TO members to attend a number of face-to-face trade events such as Crop Outlook Conferences, trade fairs and others, giving producers and traders an opportunity to make important business contacts.



A truck-load of onions from Burkina Faso to Ghana

Major activities contributing to PIR 3:

Activity 3.1: Train key producer and trader organisation representatives in advocacy skills

The MISTOWA project organized a three-day advocacy training for partner producer and trader organisations in each of the major project countries (Ghana, Nigeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Togo and Senegal). Additional participants from The Gambia, Sierra Leone, Niger and Guinea (Conakry) also attended the training held in their nearest country. The training focused on developing advocacy skills and identifying key country-specific obstacles to increased intraregional trade in West Africa. These national advocacy training events were organized in the late 2005 and early 2006.

Activity 3.2: Regional Advocacy Workshop organized in Abuja from March 27- 31, 2006.

After completion of the national advocacy training workshops (above), MISTOWA brought together 120 leaders of POs/TOs from all over West Africa for a week of discussions in Abuja, Nigeria. The objective of this workshop was to formulate regional advocacy strategies and to establish a plan to address the most important constraints to intraregional trade in West Africa. The workshop aimed to consolidate issues discussed at national advocacy workshops into a coherent regional-level advocacy action plan. The workshop assembled previously trained representatives of

the organizations and experts from WAEMU, ECOWAS, USAID, WATH, MISTOWA, TIPCEE, TradeMali, AGRITERRA, BBO and other partners.

Activity 3.3: Establish National Advocacy Committees and elaborate country-specific national advocacy action plans

Directly after completion of the regional advocacy workshop in Abuja, participants returned to their various countries to inform others of progress made in Abuja. In each country (Ghana, Nigeria, Togo, Benin, Mali, Burkina Faso and Senegal), MISTOWA coordinators worked with partners to establish a National Advocacy Committee charged with elaborating a country-specific national advocacy plan in line with the regional strategies and plans outlined in Abuja. The national advocacy committees continue to function, follow up and report on advocacy activities carried out and progress in each country.

Activity 3.4: MISTOWA-trained agricultural advocates attend 5th annual WACSOFF meeting.

Initial contacts made in Abuja led to increased exposure for MISTOWA PO/TO partners. MISTOWA subsequently sponsored a delegation of 22 producers and traders from Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Togo and Senegal to West Africa Civil Society Forum (WACSOFF's) fifth annual meeting in Ouagadougou in December 2006. A thematic working group, "Food, Agriculture and Environment Advocacy," was formed and placed under the leadership of IFDC/MISTOWA, thus putting PO/TOs in an important leveraging position.

Results for this activity:

- Each of the key MISTOWA countries (Ghana, Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Senegal) established a National Advocacy Committee that now meets periodically (monthly to quarterly depending on the country and availability of members) to advance strategies to address key obstacles to intraregional trade. Committees define their own activities which have thus far included: researching national and local laws and regulations that support intraregional trade and making such information available to PO/TOs; meeting with relevant Ministries and high-level government officials to advocate for action pertaining to specifically-identified obstacles; feeding back information from the regional advocacy workshop to in-country PO/TOs; and meeting with members of

neighboring national advocacy committees to discuss how neighboring countries can help each other address difficulties in cross-border trade.

- The regional advocacy workshop in Abuja was very successful as it marked a unique occasion for PO/TO representatives to present directly to ECOWAS parliamentary representatives as well as to representatives of WAEMU, NEPAD and other major policy organizations, the major obstacles they face with respect to intraregional trade, and to put forward their ideas for strategies and actions to be undertaken to address these obstacles.



Participants presenting the regional advocacy plan to ECOWAS experts in Abuja, Nigeria

- Initial contacts made in Abuja helped producers and traders to claim a stronger voice with respect to advocating for issues that concern them. Key linkages have been made, establishing producers and traders as partners in policy development at the regional level.

Challenges ahead:

- Progress with respect to producers' and traders' increased capacity to advocate before national governments and regional policy making bodies requires continued technical and financial support to ensure that appropriate actions are carried out in order to actively address issues that are now successfully tabled at the regional level for discussion.

Documents & Reports Produced

A: Project Documents

1. Performance Monitoring Plan
2. Annual Work Plan 2005
3. Annual Work Plan 2006
4. Annual & revised Work Plan 2007
5. Quarterly reports (Q1 -4, 2005)

6. Quarterly reports (Q1 -4, 2006)
7. Quarterly reports (Q1 -3, 2007)
8. End-of-Project Report
9. MISTOWA Grants report
10. Testimonies of Beneficiaries
11. Gender Impact Analysis Report
12. 22 MISTOWA Newsletters in English and French
13. ABIP Guide in English and French
14. Directory of 150 potential ABIPs in West Africa
15. ABIP Technical Training Manual
16. ABIP Business Training Manual
17. Compiled list of Success Stories
18. MISTOWA In Press (Clippings and Video)

B. Consultants' Reports

1. Regional Advocacy Workshop Report (BBO)
2. Trade Association Training Report (Jim Stanelle)
3. Gender Report (Nancy Horn)
4. Baseline Data Report (Hassanein)
5. Inventory of POs and TOs (Prosper Bissi)
6. Report on Food Corps Quality Standard Establishment (USDA)

Databases established

1. Master Excel File of Events participation
2. Master Excel File of Trade Deals
3. Database of Key MISTOWA power point presentations
4. Master Excel database of historic price data on over 50 agricultural commodities in 8 countries

Lessons Learned

Think regionally, but focus on activities at the national and local levels

MISTOWA's early strategy involved working with the existing regional level networks of Market Information Service providers (RESIMAO), producer organizations (ROPPA and RECAO) and trader organizations (ROESAO and FACIA). Other key partners at the regional level were ECOWAS, CILSS and WAEMU. The strategy was to reinforce these regional bodies so they could in turn reinforce their national and local level affiliates. It became evident that these regional bodies had various expectations and agenda other than providing direct support to producers and traders to use modern tools to increase intra-regional agricultural trade. It was also administratively difficult to work with several of these regional bodies. Hence, MISTOWA adopted a different approach and successfully worked directly at the national and local levels. This, at times, was not altogether appreciated by these regional organizations and ROPPA in particular. The lesson learned is to think regionally but act locally, while maintaining solid diplomatic relationships with the regional bodies.

Developing strong and professional associations is key to increased intra-regional trade

Prior to MISTOWA intervention, the majority of producer and trader associations were far too weak to effectively play their critical roles along the value chain. As explained in preceding sections of this report, MISTOWA worked extensively with targeted POs and TOs to improve their skills in various domains. Although the overall capacity and skill level of targeted POs and TOs improved in a variety of ways, most of these POs and TOs are still not able to play their right role in facilitating trade along the value chain. They simply need longer term support focusing on further capacity building through training, coaching, equipment, and financial support (credit) to ensure that they rise to the desired level of competency. In many of the associations with which MISTOWA worked, members often feel their voices are not heard, nor do they feel the association is meeting their needs. As a result, they do not see the benefit in paying their membership dues to remain in the association when the perceived benefits do not measure up against the costs incurred. In many cases this factor has led to dependence on sporadic, short term donor funds to support the implementation of association activities. This can be counterproductive in a situation where what is actually needed is long term investments aimed at real capacity building. MISTOWA's effort to try to split resources between association building/professionalism and skills development to enable actors to participate more effectively

in the value chain led to mixed results. As the end result of any project that works on association development should be the long-term sustainability of targeted associations, it is necessary to have a longer-term project that focuses mainly on association building and professionalism.

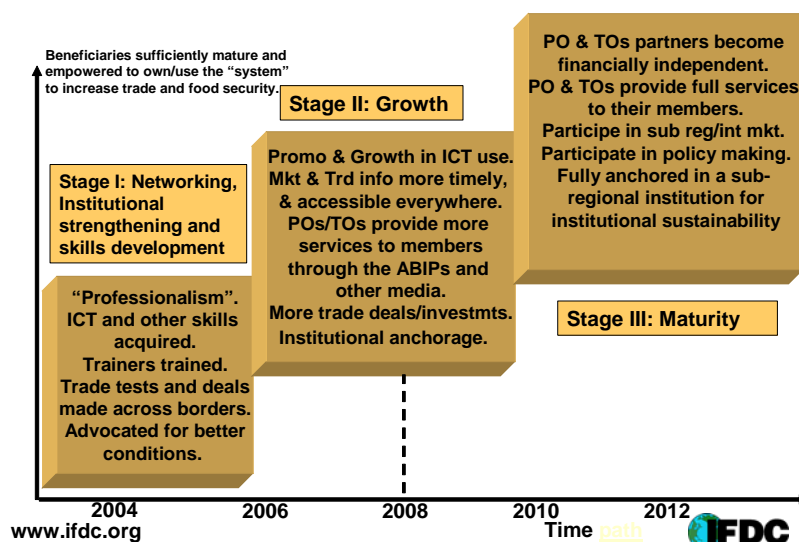
Three years not enough to attain any reasonable level of sustainability

MISTOWA's exit strategy consisted of three stages that were supposed to lead to sustainability of the associations and activities from 2010 onwards. In the pursuit of its strategy,

MISTOWA spent FY 2005 developing professionalism within the associations introducing them to new skills that would be useful for business and for increasing inter-regional trade (see figure). The plan for FY 06 was then to enter the growth stage where the use of Tradenet and other tools would be promoted and expanded, and stakeholders linked up to make trade deals. FY 07 and FY 08 were to be the

stages of maturity where MISTOWA was to focus its efforts in consolidating gains and helping the associations to develop pay-for service activities to generate revenues and become financially sustainable by 2010. Unfortunately, the project ended pre-maturely in September 2007, leaving the sustainability of the ABIPs and the associations in doubt.

A time path for sustainability



A great deal of enthusiasm for TradeNet as an operating tool

Over the course of the project, and particularly since the establishment of the ABIPs and the launches of Tradenet in various countries, MISTOWA noted a high level of enthusiasm among producers and traders and genuine interest in TradeNet by numerous and diverse partners. Public sector MIS, by virtue of the lack of timeliness and limited scope of trade-pertinent information they offer, are simply not designed to cater to the needs of producers and traders (though they adequately serve the needs of policy makers and governments).

Producers and traders are generally excited when they first learn about Tradenet and in particular, about accessing information using their cell phones. At first, TradeNet is an attractive novelty. The real challenge during MISTOWA was – and continues to be – taking this novelty a step further to ensure that it attracts a growing number of regular users. By end of September 2007 a number of producers and traders began to emerge as regular Tradenet Users. However, Tradenet’s continued and growing success depends upon the extent to which these users are able to parlay information into concrete, profitable trade deals, and the extent to which IFDC and Tradenet are able to communicate these successes to other potential users to promote Tradenet use.