

AID-FOR-TRADE CASE STORY

SINGAPORE

International Monetary Fund – Singapore Regional Training Institute

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Type:	International Monetary Fund - Singapore Regional Training Institute To provide training in macroeconomic and financial management to government officials from the Asia-Pacific region
Author:	Singapore Cooperation Programme, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Singapore, Tanglin, Singapore 248163 Tel: +65 63798471 Fax: +65 64793357

I. Issues Addressed

1 The International Monetary Fund-Singapore Regional Training Institute (IMF-STI) is a joint venture between the IMF and the Government of Singapore. Located in Singapore, the STI provides training in macroeconomic and financial management, and related legal and statistical issues, to government officials from the Asia-Pacific region. The STI, the IMF's regional training hub in Asia, is one of the seven regional training institutes and programs of the IMF Institute, which is headquartered in Washington, D.C. The other six regional institutes are located in Austria, Brazil, China, India, Tunisia, and the United Arab Emirates.

2 Trade and financial management policies are important components of macroeconomic and financial management. As part of the overall macroeconomic strategy of an economy, they affect an economy's openness, trade structure, investment flows, and its overall balance of payments. By providing training in the design and implementation of macroeconomic policies, the STI helps in building the policymaking capacity of developing economies to be connected to the global economy, and hence contributes directly to Aid-for-Trade (Aft).

II. Objectives Pursued

3 To promote a stable international framework for trade and investments, a core activity of the STI is to provide technical assistance and training to economies in the Asia Pacific region. Likewise, as a strong proponent of free trade that believes in helping other economies integrate into and benefit from the multilateral trading system, Singapore is committed to assisting developing economies in their efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals through human resource capacity building. Both human resource capacity building and free trade have been key factors in Singapore's own development success.

4 Today, the Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP) under the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs conducts courses, seminars, workshops and study visits in key areas that can contribute to the economic and trade capacity of developing economies. STI, as a joint undertaking of the IMF and Singapore, is dedicated to building institutional capacity and enhancing human capital in macroeconomic and financial management in the Asia-Pacific region.

III. (For projects and programmes: Design and Implementation)

5 STI's training courses are designed to address the macroeconomic and financial policy challenges faced by developing economies. Besides broad macroeconomic and financial management, the specific topics covered include the design of frameworks for collecting and reporting macroeconomic and financial statistics; monetary, financial, fiscal, and exchange rate policies; tax policy; revenue administration and expenditure management.

6 Most STI courses are run over two weeks, with shorter programmes organized for more senior officials. Each year, STI provides training conducted in Singapore to more than 700 government officials, while about 100 officials attend national or regional courses conducted elsewhere in the region. The cost of STI operations and participant-related expenses (training materials, airfares, accommodation, living allowances, and medical insurance) are jointly covered by the IMF and Singapore. For its share of the STI's costs, the IMF receives substantial contributions from Japan, with additional support provided by Australia.

IV. Problems Encountered

7 The global, as well as regional, economic and financial landscapes are evolving rapidly. The challenge faced by STI (and the IMF Institute which oversees all global training) is to comprehend the experience of recent years and distil policy lessons that can be adapted to different regional contexts. In order to do this, STI works closely with the IMF headquarters, universities, think-tanks, governments, and international organisations.

V. Factors for Success/Failure

8 To meet the changing needs of the Asia-Pacific region, the STI curriculum is continually adapted in response to inputs from IMF member economies, regional and international organisations. For example, in January 2010, the Second STI Meeting on Training was convened in Singapore to discuss STI's offerings with training directors at central banks and finance ministries from 23 economies in the Asia-Pacific region. The training directors provided feedback on the mix of courses offered at the STI, and requested additional coverage of topics such as payment systems, legal frameworks for problem banks and resolving transparency, public debt management, monetary and financial statistics, government financial statistics and price statistics. By maintaining a continuous dialogue with economies in the region, STI keeps its curriculum relevant and updated.

9 The selection of suitable course participants is crucial to ensuring that the training provides the maximum benefit to recipient economies. As there is a limit to STI's training capacity, participants for its training courses are carefully selected through a rigorous selection process. Firstly, participants must be reasonably proficient in English. Secondly, they have to be officials whose current jobs and responsibilities are closely related to the subject of the course. Thirdly, the applicants must have the requisite educational background, knowledge and experience, including relevant computer skills.

10 The selection of participants is time consuming, and at times, a difficult process. STI staff work closely with the training directors and IMF Resident Representatives in member economies to identify the most suitable candidates for specific courses. Training directors are consulted and informed of selection decisions, and kept updated on the design and offering of new and additional courses.

11 Teaching staff—which includes IMF staff members, consultants, and senior officials from member economies—are crucial to the success of the STI. It is very important that teaching staff have both the relevant knowledge and practical experience to discuss and analyze best practices and case studies. To keep the course materials and curriculum updated, STI professional staff engage in policy-oriented research. Attracting first-rate professionals with the requisite qualifications to teach at the STI is one of the key ingredients for success.

VI. Results Achieved

12 Since the establishment of the STI in 1998, over 200 courses have been conducted for more than 8000 officials from the Asia-Pacific region. The courses have generally been well subscribed, which suggests that the topics covered by the STI are relevant and useful to economies in the region. This conclusion is reinforced by surveys conducted by independent agencies and feedback received from government institutions that sponsor participants for STI events. Participating economies have stated that their officials benefit considerably from STI training and the experience it offers in discussing international, regional, and economy-specific issues with IMF staff and officials from other economies in the Asia-Pacific.

VII. Lessons Learned

13 From Singapore's perspective, the STI is a good example of successful cooperation with the IMF and other economies in the region. STI seeks to offer a curriculum that is responsive to the current needs and policy challenges. The training directors from economies in the region provide critical inputs that enable STI to keep the curriculum updated and relevant. This is achieved mainly through STI staff engaging the training directors of economies and keeping them informed of developments at the STI.

VIII. Conclusion (applicability to other programs)

14 Singapore strongly supports WTO's AfT initiative, and is committed to helping developing economies raise their capacity to maximise benefits from the multilateral trading system. An important platform of our support for AfT is the SCP. As much as 80% of our Singapore Cooperation Programme training courses are targeted, directly or indirectly, at enhancing the economic capacity of recipient economies, to enable them to participate more effectively in the multilateral trading system. The STI model of cooperation between the IMF, Singapore, and other Asia Pacific economies has been a very successful model for AfT.

