



LAS-Q011

TTLABS Management of Activities during Extraordinary Events or Circumstances

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Issued by: TTLABS
Approved: Manager, TTLABS
Date: January 2021

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this document is to define the policy regarding the management of activities in the event of any special situation that negatively impacts the normal business operations of the Trinidad and Tobago Laboratory Accreditation Service (TTLABS).
- 1.2 It is understood that opportunities, challenges and risks continuously present themselves to every organisation in the business environment. However, there are situations where the outcomes are unpredictable, particularly when events or circumstances occur that are beyond the control of the organisation.
- 1.3 In such events or circumstances, every effort must be made to ensure that TTLABS and its stakeholders work together to continue to provide consistent, competent, impartial and reliable services through maintaining conformance to international, national and other relevant requirements.
- 1.4 It is imperative that TTLABS and its stakeholders exhibit reasonable due diligence, mutual understanding and trust and respond to extraordinary events with an appropriate course of actions.
- 1.5 It is TTLABS' intention and priority to assess all risks during extraordinary events or circumstances and explore the most practical solutions to mitigate negative impacts on the business and maintain a high quality of service for our stakeholders.

2.0 SCOPE

- 2.1 This policy is applicable to all TTLABS activities, which may occur during all extraordinary events or circumstances as defined below.
- 2.2 This policy is applicable whether the extraordinary event affects TTLABS only, the stakeholder only, or both TTLABS and the stakeholder simultaneously.

3.0 DEFINITIONS

3.1 Extraordinary event or circumstance

a circumstance beyond the control of the organization, commonly referred to as "Force Majeure" or "act of God". Examples include but are not limited to war, strike, riot, political instability, geopolitical tension, terrorism, crime, pandemic, flooding, earthquake, malicious computer hacking, other natural or man-made disasters.

3.2 Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

is the use of technology for gathering, storing, retrieving, processing, analysing and transmitting information. It includes software and hardware such as smartphones, handheld devices, laptop computers, desktop computers, drones, video cameras, wearable technology, artificial intelligence, and others.

3.3 Remote assessment

Assessment of the physical location or virtual site of a conformity assessment body, using electronic means.

4.0 POLICY

4.1 CONTINUATION OF ACTIVITIES BY ALTERNATIVE METHODS

- 4.1.1 Based on the effects of extraordinary events or circumstances on the business, economy, environment, infrastructure and normal operations of an entity, it may not be possible to conduct business activities in the normal way or provide access to the business for conduct of regular activities.
- 4.1.2 In such cases, TTLABS' first priority will be to assess the risks associated with an event and explore alternative methods to continue providing services to our stakeholders. These methods may include, but are not limited to the:
- i. assessment and implementation of appropriate mitigation plans for the risks presented as a result of the extraordinary event or circumstance, whether to TTLABS, the stakeholder, or both;
 - ii. use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools to host meetings, trainings and other events, where possible;
 - iii. conversion of services and associated transactions from manual or paper-based to digital or electronic;
 - iv. alteration of TTLABS requirements to accommodate limitations surrounding an extraordinary event or circumstance;
 - v. integration of various techniques for assessments such as remote assessment, off-site document/record/file review, witnessing and interviews through ICT.

NOTE: Where alternative methods are used for assessment activities, it may be necessary to schedule normal on-site assessments immediately following the occurrence of the extraordinary event or circumstance to confirm the technical validity of the laboratory's operations.

4.2 POSTPONEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

- 4.2.1 Where it is not practical to conduct activities through alternative methods, consideration will be given to the feasibility of postponing such activities for a predetermined period. Criteria may be established for such situations once analysed on a case-by-case basis.
- 4.2.2 Where activities are postponed, TTLABS will determine a suitable date for the rescheduled activities. This will be based on the circumstances surrounding the postponement.
- 4.2.3 Assessment activities may be postponed for a period not usually exceeding six (6) months, but may be extended based on the specific case at hand.
- 4.2.4 Postponement of any activities will take into consideration the risk to TTLABS, the stakeholder and National and International obligations.

4.3 OTHER MEASURES

- 4.3.1 TTLABS requires all their accredited facilities to establish a policy to manage extraordinary events which may occur and impact their operations. This policy

shall take into consideration the intent to manage risks that may occur as the result of the extraordinary event.

- 4.3.2 Specific information may be gathered by TTLABS from stakeholders when determining the best course of action to respond to an extraordinary event or circumstance. In this case, appropriate surveys, questionnaires and similar tools will be developed at the time of the event to gather information on the facts surrounding the impact of the extraordinary event or circumstance.
- 4.3.3 Specific or unique actions may need to be derived at the time of the event due to one or more of the following occurring in response to an extraordinary event or circumstance:
- i. changes in an economy's legislation;
 - ii. the implementation of measures by an economy that significantly impact the work of TTLABS and/or its stakeholders;
 - iii. global limitations that affect the work of organizations, accreditation bodies and economies, for example, limited or no availability to foreign resources.
- 4.3.4 When all other options are exhausted and the continuation of activities by TTLABS or its stakeholders are not possible, specific actions may be implemented, at the time of an event, to manage risks appropriately. Such decisions may include, but are not limited to:
- iv. extension of a laboratory's accreditation cycle;
 - v. suspension or withdrawal of a laboratory's accreditation status;
 - vi. reduction of a laboratory's scope of accreditation;
 - vii. utilization of a local AB to assist with assessment activities where access to another economy is not possible during the extraordinary event or circumstance;
 - viii. transfer of accreditation to another recognized Accreditation body;
 - ix. withdrawal from a medical PT programme;
 - x. cancellation of a TTLABS event such as conference, training or meeting.

4.4 OBLIGATIONS OF STAKEHOLDERS DURING EXTRAORDINARY EVENTS OR CIRCUMSTANCES

- 4.4.1 Where an extraordinary event or circumstance affects the ability of a stakeholder to conduct business and maintain conformance to accreditation requirements, where applicable, the stakeholder shall implement its risk management process.
- 4.4.2 The stakeholder must keep regular and appropriate communications with TTLABS to provide updates on the organization's status during an extraordinary event or circumstance, or to provide relevant information on activities in which they are engaged with TTLABS.

NOTE: Regular and appropriate communications is dependent on the nature and potential risk or threat presented by the extraordinary event or circumstance. Things to be considered are urgency, frequency and medium of communication.

4.4.3 For continuity of TTLABS activities through ICT, it is recommended that stakeholders take the following actions in order to facilitate such mechanisms.

- i. Check your IT systems and ensure that access is granted to one of the following web-conferencing solutions: Skype, Cisco Webex, Zoom Meeting, GoTo Meeting or Google Meet.

NOTE: A license is not required to utilize these platforms, where TTLABS is the host.

- ii. Inform TTLABS if there is a different platform that your organization may prefer over the abovementioned tools. Once TTLABS can access the programme securely it can be used alternatively to conduct activities. TTLABS requires agreement by our stakeholders to utilize any platform recommended to conduct activities.
- iii. Ensure that adequate controls are in place to avoid abuses that could compromise integrity of activities being conducted. Inform TTLABS if you have any special security requirements for the use of ICT tools.
- iv. Ensure staff are familiar with the technology prior to conducting activities to manage audio, screen sharing and other features to avoid unnecessary delays.
- v. For live streaming, check that you can live stream with visual and 2-way audio at the location. Ensure that mobile networks or wi-fi are available to run the live stream.
- vi. If on-line connectivity fails or is not possible, then telephone conferencing and file sharing shall be explored.

4.4.4 Laboratories are expected to provide information to TTLABS on the following:

- i. the extent of the effect of an extraordinary event or circumstance on its operations;
- ii. the current status of the laboratory's activities and if the laboratory has made a decision to suspend activities for an extended period (>3 weeks);
- iii. actions implemented or to be implemented to mitigate impacts of the event on the business;
- iv. preferred modes of communication during the extraordinary event or circumstance;
- v. any temporary deviations in the laboratory's processes and justification for such;
- vi. any request to modify the laboratory's scope of accreditation based on deviations;
- vii. any request to voluntarily suspend part or all of the accreditation scope during an extraordinary event or circumstance;
- viii. any deviations from accreditation requirements that may pose a significant risk to maintaining TTLABS accreditation;
- ix. the cancellation of services requested from TTLABS such as the PT subscription or attendance at a training programme.

- 4.4.5 Laboratories that are able to facilitate remote assessments shall make available the following information.
- i. Key personnel and top management that would facilitate interviews via telephone or web-conferencing as applicable during activities;
 - ii. Documentation to be reviewed to determine conformance to relevant requirements. These may include, but are not limited to: internal audit programmes and reports, management review minutes, records of complaints, nonconforming work and corrective actions, risk assessments, competence records, proficiency testing (PT) and quality control (QC) data;
 - iii. Witnessing of technical activities through live streaming, recordings, post audit reviews or technical interviews. Terms for recordings will need to be discussed and agreed upon. Post audit reviews will include selection of job files and interviews with the associated persons to confirm activities. Technical interviews will include TTLABS technical assessors communicating with technical staff on key aspects of the technical activity.
- 4.4.6 It is the responsibility of the laboratory to ensure that it continues to provide competent, consistent, impartial and reliable services during the extraordinary period, even in the absence of independent on-site or other assessments.

5.0 REFERENCES

IAF ID 3:2011 – IAF Informative Document For Management of Extraordinary Events or Circumstances Affecting ABs, CABs and Certified Organizations

IAF MD 4:2018 – IAF Mandatory Document for the Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for Auditing/Assessment Purposes

IAF ID 12:2015 – IAF Informative Document Principles on Remote Assessment

ISO/IEC 17011:2017 – Conformity assessment — Requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies