

Programme Evaluation Series

Evaluation of the Flexible Multi-Partner Mechanism (FMM)

Management response

| Management response to the Evaluation of the Flexible Multi-Partner Mechanism (FMM) | | | | | 10/2021 |
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| | | Actions to be taken, and/or comments about partial acceptance or rejection | Responsible unit | Time frame | Further funding required (Y or N) |
| <p>Recommendation 1.</p> <p>Review and update FMM's theory of change.</p> <p>FAO should review and revise the FMM Theory of Change to align with the new Strategic Framework. In particular, the FMM Theory of Change should be revised to better articulate how the flexible funding of the FMM contributes to FAO's effectiveness. Clearer elaboration of this in the Action Pathway of the Theory of Change should assist in informing choices about the selection of Programme Priority Areas and subprogrammes in the next phase of the FMM. In revising the Theory of Change, FAO should also provide precise definitions of key concepts, for example, flexibility, catalytic and innovation.</p> | <p>Accepted</p> <p>Management welcomes the recommendation to review and align the FMM Theory of Change to the new Strategic Framework. This recommendation will be addressed along with the revision of the FMM Governance for the next phase (2022-25).</p> | <p>Review and align FMM's Theory of Change (ToC) with the new Strategic Framework. Elaborate the Action Pathway of the ToC to better inform choices of Priority Programme Areas, and clearly showing potential contribution to the Strategic Objectives and the SDGs;</p> <p>Revise the FMM Governance Document to include definition of key concepts, principles and terminologies as they apply to the FMM.</p> | <p>PSR Division, in coordination with TUs at HQ and Decentralized Offices (DOs).</p> | <p>December 2022</p> | <p>Continuous implementation</p> |

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| <p>Recommendation 2.</p> <p>Develop a dedicated resource mobilization strategy for FMM.</p> <p>FAO should develop a resource mobilization strategy dedicated to the FMM. The resource mobilization strategy should go beyond the traditional resource mobilization approaches to include exploration of emerging financing modalities, for example, impact investments, blended finance, and non-financial resources (expertise). The resource mobilization strategy should explore the inclusion of non-traditional resource partners, for example, philanthropic organizations and the private sector with due consideration for conflicts of interest. The FMM resource mobilization strategy should be aligned to the broader resource mobilization strategy of the Resource Mobilization and Private Sector Partnerships Division (PSR).</p> | <p>Partially accepted</p> <p>Management has noted the recommendation to develop a dedicated resource mobilization strategy for the FMM. Governing Bodies have however mandated the development of a new FAO corporate resource mobilization strategy, and FMM specific requirements will be embedded and highlighted in it.</p> | <p>The upcoming FAO's corporate resource mobilization (RM) strategy will have a dedicated component on flexible funds in the Organization, including FMM, and others such as SFERA, ASTF, etc.</p> <p>Flexible Funds will be nested within the corporate RM strategy, which will include the private sector, non traditional donors and emerging financing modalities. The FMM will base its RM business plan on the corporate RM strategy.</p> | <p>PSR Division, in coordination with relevant technical divisions at HQ, and the Regional Offices</p> | <p>December 2022</p> | <p>Continuous implementation</p> |

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| <p>Recommendation 3.</p> <p>Increase the level of flexibility and pooling of resources at subprogramme level.</p> <p>FAO should increase the pooling of Resource Partner contributions at subprogramme level to reduce fragmentation of the FMM portfolio, and to ensure that the funding allocated to a subprogramme is sufficient to achieve the intended outcomes of the Subprogramme.</p> | <p>Accepted</p> <p>Management fully supports the recommendation to increase flexibility and pooling of resources at Subprogramme level. However, while FAO retains the responsibility for allocation of resources, increasing the level of pooling can only be feasible if the contributions received by FAO are less earmarked. Over 90% of funds allocated to FMM Subprogrammes in the current phase are above USD 1 million, which is considered sufficient to achieve the intended outcomes. FMM</p> | <p>Facilitate a discussion with the FMM Resource Partners Advisory Group on the possibility of, and modalities for, establishing a minimum threshold of unearmarked fund within the funding envelope of each resource partner's contribution to the FMM.</p> <p>Increase pooling of funds at Subprogramme level, subject to the level of flexibility of available funds received and the timing.</p> <p>Ensure that project formulators understand it is their responsibility to define results and timeline based on the allocated fund, with no expectation of additional funds. This will include plan for sustainability of the activities beyond FMM's funding period.</p> | DDG/PSR Division | December 2022 | Continuous implementation |

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| | remains a catalytic and seed fund, not a primary or exclusive source of funding. | | | | |
| <p>Recommendation 4.</p> <p>Delink the duration of subprogrammes from the funding cycle.</p> <p>FAO should change its approach of tying the duration of subprogrammes to the availability of funding in a given biennium, which limits the duration of subprogrammes to a maximum of two years. Delinking the duration of subprogrammes from the biennium funding cycle will give FAO greater flexibility in designing subprogrammes that have durations commensurate with their intended outcomes.</p> | <p>Accepted</p> <p>Management accepts the recommendation to delink the duration of Subprogrammes implementation from the funding cycle. The recommendation is in line with recent PSR's agreement with Resource Partners to avoid mandatory closure of all funded Subprogrammes by the end of the Medium-Term Plan. Instead, a no-cost extension of the implementation period has been granted for all ongoing</p> | <p>Establish clear funding period and implementation period for Subprogrammes in the Governance Document, and the Operational Guide.</p> <p>Ensure that the implementation of Subprogrammes funded during each FMM phase [i.e. Medium Term Plan (MTP)] continues until the end of the first biennium of the following MTP. The actual duration of Subprogrammes will be determined, on case-by-case, based on actual time required to achieve intended outcomes.</p> | <p>PSR Division, in coordination with LTOs, and CSFE</p> | <p>December 2023</p> | <p>Continuous implementation</p> |

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| | Subprogrammes until December 2023 (on case-by-case basis). | | | | |
| <p>Recommendation 5.</p> <p>Increase engagement and participation of decentralized offices in FMM.</p> <p>FAO should ensure that Decentralized Offices are actively engaged in the development of concept proposals and in the detailed design of subprogrammes. Regional Offices should be invited to identify and prioritize FMM proposals and should be involved in decision-making in the selection of countries for implementation.</p> | <p>Accepted</p> <p>Management fully agrees with the recommendation to increase engagement with decentralised offices, especially in the decision-making regarding the selection of countries and priority themes (in line with FMM criteria), in the design of Subprogrammes, budget holder responsibility and implementation. The sole exception to this may be purely normative work that does not have specific in-country components.</p> | <p>Formalize arrangement to ensure that regional and subregional offices play key roles in identifying priority areas and countries for implementation (in line with the FMM criteria), including leading or co leading technical designs and support implementation of Subprogrammes.</p> <p>Review the procedure and criteria for designating lead technical units (LTUs), lead technical officers (LTOs), and budget holders (BH) responsibility, with mutual agreement of relevant DOs and HQ units. Apply subsidiarity principle as much as possible.</p> | <p>PSR Division, in coordination with PSS (Project Cycle), Decentralized Offices and relevant technical units.</p> | <p>December 2022</p> | <p>Continuous implementation</p> |

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| <p>Recommendation 6.</p> <p>Improve the effectiveness of the FMM resource allocation processes.</p> <p>FAO should continue to improve the effectiveness of the FMM resource allocation processes. An important action that is needed is for FAO to provide more precise definitions of the resource allocation criteria. There should be greater transparency in soliciting of concept proposals through an open call for proposals, with clear criteria and application requirements to ensure that 'bankable' proposals are submitted. FAO should put in place a formal process for assuring the technical quality of concept proposals.</p> | <p>Partially accepted</p> <p>Management agreed that resource allocation criteria would be further improved in the next phase. However, management does not consider open calls for proposals to be efficient for the FMM, as it will limit the opportunity to better target the resources to priorities of both FAO and Resource Partners. In addition, FMM funds are received at different times during the year; managing large and repeated calls for proposals will be impractical. It will substantially increase transaction costs, and</p> | <p>Formalize procedure, update and define criteria for allocating resources, with focus on clarity of procedures.</p> <p>Establish a transparent process for identifying fundable priorities, and balance between HQ and DOs—depending on whether it is at subregional, cross-regional (or global) levels.</p> <p>Introduce/delegate the identification of priorities, through call for proposals to regions and relevant technical units—ensuring cross fertilization of technical expertise and ideas, within the priorities, guideline and timeframe set by PSR.</p> | <p>PSR Division, in coordination with Regional and Subregional Offices, and TUs at HQ.</p> | <p>December 2022</p> | <p>Continuous implementation</p> |

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| | perhaps frustrations for non-selected proposals. To address this, and where scale of funding justifies it, Management may consider delegating the responsibility of managing calls for proposal to the regions. | | | | |
| <p>Recommendation 7.</p> <p>Introduce a mechanism for quality assurance for reporting.</p> <p>FAO should introduce a mechanism for quality assurance of the content of FMM annual reports to address concerns raised by implementing units and technical divisions about the technical quality of subprogramme summaries in annual progress reports. The quality assurance should include relevant FAO technical staff in</p> | <p>Accepted</p> <p>Management has noted major improvement of FMM Annual Report 2020 over previous reports, as acknowledged by Resource Partners at the Consultation in June 2020. The improvement was a product of continued inputs from FMM Resource Partners in</p> | <p>Share consolidated narrative FMM Annual reports in the next phase with the lead implementing units requesting time-bound review and quality inputs before final publishing.</p> <p>Undertake a survey of opinion of Resource Partners on what further improvement they would like to see future FMM Reports.</p> | PSR Division, in coordination with implementing units. | December 2022 | Continuous implementation |

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| reviewing and commenting on draft reports. FAO should also obtain formal feedback from Resource Partners and FAO stakeholders on the readability and usefulness of the 2020 annual progress report. | the current phase. While the preparation of single narrative FMM Annual Reports to Resource Partners remains the responsibility of PSR, efforts to ensure quality assurance will continued to be in place. | | | | |
| Recommendation 8. Thematic evaluation. FAO should ensure that FMM-funded interventions are evaluated independently to learn lessons from implementation and to enhance policies and practices. These should be thematic evaluations rather than project or programme type evaluations. The themes of these evaluations should be around resource allocation criteria or those aspects that set the FMM apart | Accepted Management has noted the recommendation for thematic evaluation, but would like to clarify that as soon as Subprogrammes become operational the FMM follows standard procedures as other FAO initiatives. Only one official evaluation is required (such as the | Undertake impact assessment of a few selected FMM initiatives that have been funded for more than four years, with focus on development impact on the beneficiaries, lessons learned and successful impact stories that could inform policy decisions for further investment and scaling up. Produce compelling communication and marketing products based on the results of the impact assessments for appropriate dissemination. Establish with Resource Partners appropriate ways of attribution of the FMM and incorporate it in the Operational Guide, and communicate clearly to implementing units. | PSR Division, in coordination with implementing units. | December 2023 | TBD |

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| from other funding modalities in FAO. For example, the FMM could be evaluated for under the theme of innovation or under the theme of catalytic effects. These thematic evaluations are distinct from the current evaluation that focused on the revised governance and implementation arrangements and will enable a deeper analysis of the FMM's contribution to FAO's results. The evaluations should be linked to a strategy for cataloguing and disseminating the knowledge generated, within FAO and beyond. | current one by OED), and there is no requirement for additional evaluation. However, Management considers a thematic impact assessment to be more appropriate. Rather than dealing with operational or governance issues, such assessment will be purely technical with in depth analysis, and focus on results generated, lessons learned, success stories and how they could be replicated, scaled up and inform investment and policy decisions. | | | | |

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