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Evaluation of FAO's Regional and Subregional Offices for Africa

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Evaluation of FAO's Regional and Subregional Offices for Africa

Final Evaluation Report –Executive Summary

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Office of Evaluation (OED)

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Key Forward Looking Messages

- **Country Offices are the key to FAO's success**
- **Stronger, more demand-driven multi-disciplinary technical teams**
- **Intensified regional administrative and operational support and Country Office oversight**
- **Full capitalization of the potential for extra-budgetary funding**
- **Focused policy dialogue**
- **Strengthened support to Pan-African institutions**

1 Background

ES1. Over the past nearly two decades, FAO has been undertaking a process of decentralization aimed at maximizing the Organization's impact at country level. The first phase began in 1994, with the strengthening of the Regional Offices (ROs) and the creation of new Sub-Regional Offices (SROs) around the world, including one in Zimbabwe. The second phase, starting in 2005, included both an expansion of the number of SROs and the progressive transfer of a number of functions and responsibilities to the decentralized offices. In Africa, three additional SROs were established in Gabon, Ghana and Ethiopia in 2007 – bringing the formal structure in the region to four SROs and one RO. Additional functions and responsibilities in priority setting; planning and allocation of financial resources; human resources and office management; field programme operations and technical support; and resource mobilization, were also progressively transferred between 2008 and 2012, with most changes occurring in 2010.

ES2. At its 106th session in April 2011, FAO's Programme Committee (PC) received the report of the *Evaluation of FAO's Regional and Sub-Regional Offices for the Near East* and its Management Response. The Programme Committee appreciated the quality of the report, found it to be important, and recommended that similar evaluations should take place in all other regions. Accordingly, the PC requested FAO's Office of Evaluation (OED) to undertake an evaluation of FAO's decentralized structures in Africa, starting in 2012. The decentralized structures in Africa include both those focused on development activities (ROs and SROs) and on emergency activities (Sub-Regional Emergency Offices – SREOs).

ES3. The main purpose of this Evaluation is to provide FAO's Governing Bodies and senior management with an independent and evidence-based assessment of the capacity of decentralized structures at regional and sub-regional levels in Africa to efficiently and effectively provide services to member countries, through an analysis of the role, functions and work undertaken by these decentralized structures. This necessarily also involved looking at the upstream (headquarters and the Shared Services Centre) and in particular downstream (Country Office – CO) levels, as they serve as the essential links for the provision of services to member countries. Given the on-going nature of the decentralization process at FAO, the Evaluation has attempted to be forward-looking and formative. Although a number of decisions have been taken during 2012 and the first half of 2013 with respect to decentralized roles and responsibilities, the Evaluation's recommendations are expected to be timely in order to contribute to the decision-making process of the Governing Bodies on decentralization matters, and to assist the decentralized offices in improving their performance.

2 The Evaluation Process

ES4. The Evaluation adopted a theory-based approach, developed on the basis of corporate documentation, to support the definition of expected outputs and outcomes of decentralization (the Theory of Change is shown in Annex 1 to this document). While the Evaluation examined many aspects of FAO decentralization, it focused on addressing the following main evaluation questions:

1. Has the Organization taken the necessary steps to implement the decentralization policy effectively?
2. Have these changes had an impact on FAO's relevance and ability to provide services to member countries directly and through partnerships?
3. In light of experience to date, is FAO's model of decentralization appropriate?

ES5. The Office of Evaluation assembled an independent team of six experts in late 2012 to conduct the Evaluation. The Evaluation included an extensive review and analysis of documentation and secondary data. The field phase of the Evaluation was carried out from December 2012 to March 2013, and included visits to FAO headquarters, the Regional Office for Africa (RAF), all SROs and SREOs, and ten selected countries in the region. In total, the mission conducted over 500 interviews with FAO personnel and partners in Africa, which were complemented by survey responses from 366 individual employees.

ES6. Subsequent to the data gathering phase, the Evaluation Team carried out a number of analyses and held several follow-up meetings with FAO staff and Government Representatives from the region on the issues emerging from the Evaluation, including the preliminary conclusions and recommendations. The consultations ended with a presentation on the Evaluation to the Programme Committee (November 2013). Presentations are also planned to the FAO Regional Management Team Meeting (December 2013) and to the Regional Conference for Africa (Tunisia, March 2014).

3 Key Findings

3.1 Implementation of FAO's decentralization plan

ES7. The Theory of Change adopted by the Evaluation Team identified six types of measures undertaken by FAO in order to create greater capacity within its decentralized offices to increase its impact at the country level. These are: (1) changes in organizational structure; (2) increased responsibility and delegated authorities; (3) personnel numbers and skills mix commensurate with the increase in responsibilities; (4) available technical multi-disciplinary expertise; (5) financial resources commensurate with new responsibilities; and (6) strong support mechanisms and systems. The Evaluation found that substantial changes in organizational structure were undertaken with the creation of three new SROs in the region, and that increased responsibility and delegated authorities were provided, particularly since 2010. In several cases, however, the delegations only shifted the "command and control" environment that previously existed between decentralized offices and headquarters to the Regional and Sub-Regional Offices, rather than creating a more empowered environment within the region. The Evaluation also found that the new roles and transferred responsibilities were not clearly delineated among the decentralized offices, and that there was a duplication of responsibilities in some cases.

ES8. The Evaluation also found a mismatch between responsibilities delegated to the decentralized offices and the resources provided to carry them out. In terms of personnel, the number of technical posts declined by 12 per cent, and were disbursed to five different offices responsible for technical support (RAF and the four SROs). Professional staffing did increase in the Country Offices with the decision to upgrade the senior professional and administration posts from general service to professional level, although in many cases these new post levels were a more accurate reflection of existing capacity than a strengthening *per se*. While the total amount of Net Appropriation for African decentralized offices has increased, this seems to be due to rising costs rather than a net increase in real terms. As a proportion of the overall Net Appropriation, the allocation to African decentralized offices increased by only 2 per cent over this period. At the same time, there was an increase in the ratio of staff to non-staff resources. Fungibility of staff/non-staff resources together with the declining availability of non-staff resources seems to have resulted in offices “managing” vacancies so as to utilize additional non-staff resources for other office costs. This is reflected in a 20 per cent average staff vacancy rate in RAF and the SROs over the evaluation period, peaking at 27 per cent in 2012. Corporate systems foreseen in the Immediate Plan of Action have been installed in the decentralized offices, but they have not yet had a substantial impact, although GRMS hold promise if appropriate support for implementation is provided. There was a noteworthy increase in training in recent years, but courses tend to be tied to the roll out of new technologies and processes rather than to ensuring a continuing competence in all aspects of the Organization’s work. In particular, training in essential functions such as programme formulation and implementation, including monitoring and evaluation, communication and resource mobilization, have been inadequate. With the decentralization of emergency response to the decentralized offices at the end of the evaluation period, capacity building needs for this purpose have been identified, but there are as yet limited steps to address them.

3.2 *The Effect of Decentralization on FAO’s work in the Region*

ES9. The Evaluation undertook an analysis of the major areas of FAO’s work in Africa in order to assess whether the changes that were implemented in the decentralization process have had an impact on the Organization’s ability to provide services to member countries. Its findings in each area are summarized below.

3.2.1 *Priority Setting and Planning*

ES10. The process of decentralization has increased the responsibility and authority for priority setting and programme planning at all decentralized office levels. At the country level, the Country Programming Frameworks (CPFs) have been a positive step in setting the foundation for FAO’s work at the country level within a results-based framework. FAO has been an active partner in UN Country Team programming and planning through the UNDAF as well, and has in most countries made an effective link with the UNDAF and the CPF. The time invested by FAO’s Country Office personnel has been substantial for both CPF and UNDAF formulation. The Evaluation Team noted that the 2012 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of the UN General Assembly urged further reductions in transaction costs associated with priority setting and planning processes, while at the same time ensuring that individual agency corporate requirements can be met. This may be an opportunity for further efficiency gains for FAO.

ES11. The establishment of the SROs with formal obligations for regional functions at the sub-regional level has effectively created a new layer of decentralized offices in Africa for priority setting and programming. The Evaluation Team found that the priority setting work undertaken for a sub-region without reference to a specific partner was general, and provided little additionality to FAO's work. It was also costly. The process of regional priority setting has improved substantially with the designation of the Regional Representative (RR) as the lead in determining regional priorities. The integration of the Regional Conference for Africa (ARC) into the governance structure of FAO, with responsibility for reviewing FAO regional priorities and transmitting their decisions on them to the Council, has also provided an important forum for regional dialogue and consensus building. Now that CPFs and the new Strategic Framework are in place, the RR, with the support of RAF staff, is in a good position to facilitate the "clear line of sight" between country priorities and global objectives. This is an opportunity for greater clarity and efficiency in priority setting and planning in FAO, which would not have been possible without the decentralization measures that are now in place.

3.2.2 FAO's Field Programme in Africa

ES12. FAO provides assistance to member countries in the form of technical and policy advice and capacity development, largely through a combination of Regular Programme-funded projects (TCPs) and projects funded through extra-budgetary (voluntary) contributions. Between 2005 and 2012, FAO delivered over USD 2 billion in assistance to countries in the Africa region through over 2,500 projects managed by Country, Regional and Sub-Regional Offices, and by headquarters departments. The amount of financial resources mobilized from voluntary contributions is six times FAO Net Appropriations for Africa, and is on an increasing trend, reaching a ratio of almost 1 to 8 in the 2010/11 biennium. While the DRR/DRM programme was almost three times the size of the development programme at the end of the evaluation period, both types of programmes have grown, by approximately 160 per cent in the case of the emergency response programme, and 39 per cent in the case of the development programme.

ES13. With respect to the development programme, responsibilities for formulation, implementation and monitoring have been increasingly decentralized to the offices in Africa. By the end of the evaluation period, the head of a decentralized office had the authority to formulate a project, guide it through the appraisal process and, once cleared, approve it and direct the implementation process as the designated Budget Holder. Technical support has remained the purview of a Lead Technical Officer (LTO), located in either a decentralized office or headquarters, who is responsible for ensuring the application of FAO technical standards and policies during the project cycle, and is the first port of call for technically backstopping the project. A Lead Technical Unit (LTU) is also designated, which exerts overall technical oversight throughout the project cycle. Increased procurement levels for goods and services in the decentralized offices has been a substantial improvement allowing for more efficient implementation. The Evaluation did find, however, a number of inefficiencies in the programme cycle with respect to both TCPs and projects funded through voluntary contributions, which arise due to the involvement of several different offices and units of the Organization in both procedural overview and technical clearance. Project appraisal and clearance take on average 4-6 months for TCPs, with longer delays not unusual. Extra-budgetary projects take at least as long. The elaborate process and consequent delays

are viewed by FAO partners as disproportionately inefficient given the small size of the project (TCPs are a maximum of \$500,000 and often much smaller). There is scope for streamlining and additional delegation of responsibilities within the project design and appraisal processes in order to increase the Organization's ability to respond promptly to member country requests. There is, however, also a skills gap in project formulation and appraisal for both technical officers in the multi-disciplinary teams (MDTs) in the region and Country Office personnel, which must be addressed to increase the quality of project documents before they enter the appraisal process.

Technical Support to Development Projects

ES14. A central feature of the decentralization process since its inception has been the location of technical expertise close to member countries to provide high quality, frequent support. The SROs in Africa are designated as the first port of call for technical input to Country Offices since their establishment in 2007. Since 2010, the SROs and the Technical Officers therein have slowly begun to play an increasing role as LTU and LTO respectively. In many instances, however, the Evaluation found that the MDTs in these offices provide only one to two technical backstopping visits per country per year, for the following reasons:

- i. There is a relatively low number of technical posts per SRO: in 2012-13 there are 31 technical office posts in the four SROs, which range in size from six posts in the SRO for Central Africa, to nine posts in each of the SROs for East and Southern Africa.. This relatively small number is exacerbated by a 19 per cent average vacancy rate in SROs during the evaluation period, peaking at 32 per cent in 2012.
- ii. The skill set of the technical teams in the SROs does not always correspond to country needs: either in terms of the areas of technical expertise, or capacity within the area to carry on upstream, policy-related work. The Evaluation found no evidence that the primary users of technical support, the FAO Representatives (FAORs), are consulted on which skills should be available from the teams, nor is the skills mix adjusted on any other basis. The Team found this to be a serious accountability gap within the decentralized office network.
- iii. Competing demands on the MDTs' time: The Evaluation Team found evidence that backstopping to country-level projects had declined by over 40 per cent between 2008 and 2012, while attendance at workshops and support to sub-regional programmes has increased.
- iv. Administrative responsibilities, support to the representation responsibilities of the Sub-Regional Coordinator, and engagement in sub-regional planning: these tasks all reduced the amount of time available to MDTs to provide country-level technical support.

ES15. The Evaluation Team found both inefficiencies in maintaining such small offices for technical support, and a lack of effectiveness in providing technical backstopping to country programmes. Regional technical officers have also provided technical backstopping to country projects, but this has not made a significant difference in addressing the "backstopping gap". It has, however, prevented them from focusing on normative work.

ES16. The Evaluation Team also recognizes that the need for technical backstopping in all likelihood would exceed MDT capacity even if all Technical Officer posts were filled, and the officers were more available. There are, however, a number of national and international technical experts on short-term contracts with FAO in the region, who are well qualified and interested in undertaking short-term assignments for technical backstopping either in their

country of residence or elsewhere. Previous evaluations have also identified this resource and recommended that it be more fully utilized, although little progress has been made in this regard. There appear to be three impediments to greater use of these personnel: reluctance on the part of the resource partner to allow the personnel to be used in this fashion; the perception that FAO contracts do not allow short-term national personnel to work outside their country; and attitudes and practices among regular budget staff which have acted as a disincentive for collaborative work across nationalities and contractual status. The Evaluation Team believes, however, that these impediments can be overcome.

Regional and Sub-regional development projects

ES17. There are substantial and growing numbers of sub-regional and regional projects carried out by the SROs, RAF and headquarters divisions. Over half of the projects operated by RAF and the SROs focused either on supporting policy work, addressing transboundary issues, and/or providing technical assistance to a Regional/Sub-Regional Economic Communities (RECs) – such as the African Union, ECOWAS, IGAD, SADC, and CILSS. Representatives of the RECs met by the Evaluation Team during its visits within the region expressed high appreciation for the results obtained through these projects in terms of policy advice. They wished to continue partnering with FAO, in particular with respect to integration issues such as agricultural trade policy and natural resources management.

ES18. A second type of regional/sub-regional project addresses issues common to a group of countries, such as fisheries management, cross-border trade or trans-boundary pests and diseases. While there are clear benefits to addressing these issues in a group of concerned countries, the “lukewarm” assessment of the relevance of some of these projects by the COs indicates that they are in some way missing the mark in terms of the specific needs of countries. This disjoint between projects that seem to be in a needed area, but that do not actually meet specific national needs, is one of the pitfalls of projects managed entirely above the national level. Implementation modalities for this type of regional/sub-regional project that provide for a mix of oversight, technical support and co-ordination by a central unit, along with in-country responsibility for national components, have been shown to yield more effective results – through higher engagement, better knowledge of the project among in-country FAO staff, and consequent synergies with other national projects.

FAO's Disaster Risk Reduction and Risk Management (DRR/DRM) work in Africa

ES19. Africa is the largest recipient of humanitarian funding globally, and the agriculture sector has received an increasing proportion of this funding over the last 10 years. Over the evaluation period, FAO's emergency relief and recovery programming has been managed largely by the Emergency and Rehabilitation Division (TCE) in Rome for interventions that have sought to mitigate the acute and medium-term consequences of conflict, drought, floods and disease. The decentralization of the emergency response programme has been under consideration since the evaluation of FAO's emergency operations in 2009. A specific timetable was established in 2012 for the handover of responsibility from TCE to FAORs for Level 1 and 2 response operations. The RO is also to be strengthened to support COs in this new role. While the decentralization of emergency response has occurred very late in the evaluation period, its implications for FAO's presence in the region in the coming years warrants discussion. With regard to these operations, the Evaluation Team found both opportunities and challenges. Several of the COs visited by the Team were successfully integrating large emergency project staff and regular budget-funded staff under the leadership

of the FAOR, with the former emergency response co-ordinator serving as a senior staff member for programme development and resource mobilization under the supervision of the FAOR. Drawing on the staff strengths and programme experience of both teams, these COs are developing programmes designed to bridge the disaster response-development “gap” by building resilience in communities and land use systems that would reduce the impact of future climatic shocks. In some countries, however, integration has met with substantial challenges, as differences in approach, operating style, contractual status and pay levels come into view.

ES20. Sub-Regional Emergency Offices (SREOs) have been playing an important role in information, analysis and advocacy, and have established solid partnerships with other UN and non-UN humanitarian actors including the RECs. However, the Evaluation Team recognizes that these ‘antenna’ offices are completely funded by extra-budgetary projects and may not be here to stay – which implies a need for considering how, over the short to medium term, DRR/DRM skills can be institutionalized within the staffing mix overall.

3.2.3 Normative work and knowledge management

ES21. The Evaluation found that FAO’s normative work continues to be very much appreciated by its partners in the region, and that there are many examples of normative work produced by decentralized offices in various areas of FAO’s mandate. Most of the normative work produced by the decentralized offices is the result of individual initiative by technical officers, whose selection of products for development is governed primarily by available extra-budgetary resources and personal area of expertise. There is no apparent overall co-ordination of normative product development within the decentralized office network in Africa, which diminishes FAO’s impact in this important area for the Organization.

ES22. Knowledge networks that provide for a free flow of ideas among colleagues at all levels of the Organization are critical for knowledge generation and up-to-date technical support. At present not nearly enough focus has been given to this important responsibility, with people relying upon informal contacts for knowledge exchange. This puts many of FAO’s younger employees and national staff, who have not been placed in headquarters, at a disadvantage.

3.2.4 Cross cutting issues: Gender and Communications

ES23. The Evaluation did not find clear evidence that decentralization has positively impacted work on gender within the region. The Gender Officer post in RAF has been vacant since January 2012. It is important to fill this position as soon as possible in order to spearhead work throughout the region. The Evaluation found that there is a need for gender training for all employees involved in programme development, and not only the gender focal points. There is ample scope for innovation by the decentralized offices in gender, but the FAORs in particular will need to take the initiative.

ES24. In terms of gender balance within the decentralized offices, there has been a modest increase in the proportion of women compared to men in professional positions in RAF and the SROs, from 22 to 33 per cent. There has been no significant increase in the number of female FAORs: in 2005 there were five, while in 2012 there were six (out of 36).

ES25. The Evaluation found substantial room for improvement in terms of communication planning and implementation within the region, although the presence of emergency response teams in some of the countries has improved capacity. As resource mobilization is an integral aspect of FAO's work within the decentralized offices, both soft communications skills and materials themselves that can adequately represent the work of the Organization will be vital. There is a need for better support in communications.

3.2.5 Management

ES26. Management in this Evaluation is taken to mean those functions of decentralized offices (human resource management, finance and administration, resource mobilization, and results-based management) that create the enabling environment for the successful delivery of FAO's programme of work by these offices. The findings of the Evaluation for each of these areas is as follows:

Human Resource Management

ES27. Recruitment: Sustained high vacancy rates have had a crippling effect on the capacity of decentralized offices to fulfil the roles intended of them in FAO's decentralization model. There is some evidence that posts are deliberately kept vacant in order to use the associated funds to cover non-staff costs, suggesting that non-staff resources as provided by the Regular Programme are insufficient to meet needs. On the other hand, FAO recruitment procedures for international staff can be very lengthy. The Evaluation Team encountered instances where the candidate was no longer available by the time the Organization had completed its appraisal process and was ready to offer employment.

ES28. Employment conditions: FAO national staff in the regions are typically employed at lower grades than their counterparts in other UN agencies. A parallel situation exists with respect to FAORs: their posts levels are on average among the lowest in the UN system. Even when a higher graded post exists, FAORs are not being promoted to the grade. These practices are likely to have a negative impact on staff morale and motivation. Heavy reliance on non-staff human resources to fulfil key roles is a feature of FAO's decentralized offices, particularly Country Offices. The contractual arrangements for non-staff human resources are *ad hoc*, with many personnel remaining on one to three month contracts for years. Even though these short term personnel outnumber regular budget staff and provide vital services to the Organization on a regular basis, there is no corporate system for performance assessment, and they are often overlooked with respect to professional development/training opportunities.

ES29. Staff responsibilities and leadership: Multiple responsibilities for SRO management and country representation are beyond what can reasonably be expected of even highly motivated individuals serving as Sub-Regional Co-ordinators. This has been a factor in the under-performance of both RAF and the SROs. The Evaluation welcomes steps already taken to screen FAOR candidates, particularly with regard to managerial and leadership capacity, and to consider FAO experience as an important qualification. While it is still too early to assess the success of this new competency-based approach, anecdotal evidence suggests that quality of FAORs has improved. Supervision of FAORs has been delegated from the RR to the Sub-Regional Co-ordinators. The Evaluation finds this inappropriate, given their partial

knowledge of the performance of the FAOR and their own experience level. Direct supervision by the RR with staff support would enable more comprehensive supervision, increase knowledge of the types of support they require from RAF, and better reflect the centrality of the FAOR function to the work of the Organization.

ES30. Employee development and training: If COs are to deliver more and better, more importance will need to be given to recruitment, performance management and skills development of both international and national personnel. While a comprehensive training needs assessment has been undertaken for decentralized offices in Africa, this has not yet translated into a concrete training programme. This affects the Organization's performance. Direct and indirect support costs provided for under extra-budgetary funding can be fully utilized for strengthening the capacity of offices to deliver FAO's programme.

ES31. Mobility: Staff mobility is important for FAO to strengthen staff capacity through exposure to a variety of professional experiences, which in turn strengthens the capacity of the Organization overall. Unfortunately, mobility of FAO staff both to and within the region has been very low. A mobility policy is needed to expedite rotation within the Organization.

ES32. Employee morale and culture change: The work culture in decentralized offices is an important determinant of the successful implementation of any decentralization measure. The Evaluation Team found that staff perceptions on culture change have generally worsened or remained unchanged over recent years. Increased attention to team building and empowerment within the office teams is needed, particularly at this critical time in those offices where emergency and development programmes are being integrated.

Finance, administration and procurement

ES33. Overall, the Evaluation Team did not find that capacities in finance and administration (with the exception of procurement) have been sufficiently strengthened over the past four biennia to be able to assume new responsibilities and to ensure adequate control and oversight. At the country level, administrative staffing typically consists of three national staff comprising an Assistant FAOR Administration and two administrative clerks, complemented where possible by personnel funded from extra-budgetary resources. AOS earnings are an essential supplementary source of income for decentralized offices, but are inefficiently used, in large part because the amount available is presented in an overly complex way, and it is not possible to accumulate AOS for larger undertakings spanning the duration of the project under which they are earned. This compromises their use for even medium duration personnel contracts or other substantial support to office operations to cover indirect costs.

ES34. The role of the Regional Office in administration and finance: The Regional Office now has many critical delegated responsibilities for oversight and support in all programmatic and administrative aspects of the Organization's work in the region. The Evaluation has found that RAF's performance in fulfilling these new roles has been mixed. The impact of new systems tools (GRMS) and additional responsibilities and capacities associated with the decentralization of responsibilities for emergency rehabilitation operations are not yet clear. RAF has been increasingly engaged in providing corporate training but has no specific capacities in this area. The newly created Results-Based Management unit has the potential to provide much needed support to COs but existing capacities within RAF are funded through a project, making their future uncertain. For these

functions, and for administrative support functions associated with convening regional governing and technical bodies, the Evaluation has found that specific posts are required. It is vitally important that the Regional Office operate efficiently and effectively, so that every FAO office in the region can do the same.

ES35. Resource mobilization: Since 2010, all decentralized offices are responsible for resource mobilization. There is, however, limited expertise within the decentralized offices to track and support resource mobilization efforts. At present, almost all of the capacity in Africa for resource mobilization is in the emergency response programmes and the related TCE-funded personnel. An important achievement in 2012 was the establishment of the Africa Trust Fund for Food Security as a result of the efforts of the Regional Representative. So far \$30 million has been pledged by Equatorial Guinea and \$10 million from Gabon, with Angola and other African countries also promising to allocate resources to the Fund. The Fund will be administered by FAO, and will support Africa-led, Africa-owned initiatives such as the CAADP to boost agricultural productivity in the region. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) has been a modest source of financing during the evaluation period. There is much more that is possible to do given FAO's comparative advantages in sustainable land, water, forestry and fisheries management, disaster risk management, and climate change mitigation and adaptation. The Organization does, however, face capacity challenges to be able to take advantage of this opportunity. The Evaluation welcomes TCI's intention to carry out a review of GEF governance in FAO and make proposals to strengthen capacity to reinforce the FAO-GEF partnership.

Results-Based Management

ES36. While projects contain results frameworks, these are at this point not necessarily linked to the results framework in the CPFs. PIREs requires SROs and RAF to outline their contributions to FAO's Strategic Framework, but the reports generated are very difficult to use for performance assessment. With the introduction of the reviewed Strategic Framework for 2010-19, it will be important to try to rationalize results based management to establish a strong but light RBM architecture for the Organization that is easy to use and generates usable information for both monitoring and reporting.

3.2.6 Support to FAO's Governing Bodies

ES37. Regional Conference for Africa (ARC): The designation of the ARC as an integral part of the governing structure of FAO is a result of FAO's move towards greater decentralization, which has been effectively carried out. Member countries have appreciated RAF's support to the ARC as Secretariat, and see the meetings as useful to discuss key programmatic and policy issues. The Evaluation found that the Conference sessions could provide more opportunity to discuss items of current concern specific to Africa, including high level policy issues.

ES38. Statutory Bodies: The following Statutory Bodies are active in the Africa region: the African Commission on Agricultural Statistics (AFCAS); the African Forestry and Wildlife Commission (AFWC); the Committee for Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture of Africa (CIFAA); the Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic (CECAF); and the South West Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission (SWIOFC). While official secretariat support for these bodies is with RAF and SFS (in the case of SWIOFC), there is also a strong

link between them and the related global bodies that are subsidiary organs of the FAO Council. This relationship is highly desirable to maintain linkages for regional experience and global synthesis to be available at both levels. There is, however, a need to clarify the regional bodies' relationship with the ARC in order to strengthen the regional institutional set up. The Evaluation found that FAO has provided good support to the Statutory Bodies through its technical officers. Technical officers in RAF and SFS need to maintain their technical link to these Statutory Bodies, but the Evaluation noted that this work does detract from their other substantive duties, and includes functions outside their technical specialty – such as logistics and meeting organization. As in the case of the ARC, this can require a substantial time commitment. In those cases where the technical post relevant to the Statutory Body is vacant, it is important for FAO to provide interim Secretary arrangements and to take the necessary steps to fill the position as soon as possible.

3.2.7 Partnerships in Africa

ES39. Partnerships enable the Organization to fulfil its mandate in a rapidly evolving environment in which there are a growing number of actors in FAO's areas of work, with specific comparative advantages in knowledge of and position within the local environment, technical expertise and access to resources. FAO's success through decentralization in strengthening its relationships with its major partners is described below.

ES40. The African Union (AU). In recent years, and in line with the ARC recommendations, the FAO/AU collaboration has focused primarily on capacity strengthening and direct support to the AU Directorate of Rural Economic and Agriculture, and the NEPAD Planning and Co-ordination Agency/CAADP. Working within the framework of the Regional Co-ordination Mechanism, and as co-ordinator and co-chair of the Agriculture Food Security and Rural Development Cluster, FAO has mobilized increased support for the CAADP agenda. Now that the CAADP initiative is moving into its implementation phase for many countries, FAO involvement will be all the more important, given its country level presence. This may require steps to increase capacity at CO and sub-regional levels in policy analysis and support to investment planning. The recent appointment of a senior staff member to the SRO in Addis Ababa with responsibility for liaison with the AU will also likely result in a more structured FAO response, which the Evaluation welcomes.

ES41. Regional Economic Communities: FAO has focused its work with RECs on those recognized by the AU as the main building blocks of economic integration on the continent. These are: the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD). The strengthening of RAF and the establishment of new SROs in Ghana, Gabon and Ethiopia as a part of the decentralization process has had positive results in strengthening partnerships with the RECs, as well as with AU and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). In its field discussions, the Evaluation mission found strong appreciation both by the RECs and by member countries for the support provided by FAO through TCPs and extra-budgetary projects. It was recognized that despite the lengthy approval procedures and the usual start-up delays, most projects do achieve their intended objectives, and FAO has made useful contributions. However, FAO has not formulated a strategic framework for its partnerships

with RECs, with clearly defined objectives and related resource envelopes and plans of action for their implementation. While new partnership MoUs have been signed with a number of RECs, these agreements are limited to a broad definition of the potential areas and forms of collaboration. Collaboration is at present carried out on an *ad hoc* basis, and the activities depend largely on the expertise available in the SROs and the interest of individual technical officers.

ES42. Partnerships with other UN agencies. FAO, primarily through the SRO for Eastern Africa in Addis Ababa (SFE), works closely with UNECA in a number of technical areas, as well as collaborating on NEPAD/CAADP. FAO is a member of the Regional Co-ordination Mechanism, convened by UNECA, and the UN Regional Management Team which has oversight of the Resident Co-ordinators in the region, and overall management of the Country Team process. Collaboration also occurs at the sub-regional level in the humanitarian hubs between the SREOs and other UN/IASC agencies with respect to food security monitoring, analysis and communication work.

ES43. The primary level of UN agency collaboration is however at the national level, through FAO's participation in the UN Country Team. FAO is almost universally seen as a valuable Country Team member that contributes substantively in important ways, such as leading the food security and/or agriculture theme groups, not only among the UN family but also in Development Partner groups. The exception to this are the cases where the FAOR is also the SRC, as noted above, when they are often missing with respect to country level work. Several UN agencies expressed regret that FAO's resources were so small, given the importance of food security and agricultural production in Africa. On FAO's part, participation in the UNDAF was seen as time consuming, but overall an advantage because of the increase in partnerships among the UN family which at times led to joint programmes supporting the concept of "Delivering as One".

ES44. Partnerships with civil society: Civil society organizations (CSOs) are an important partner for FAO, as they are able to bring together many of those most in need of support in the realms of food security and agriculture, and bring their perspectives to national and regional dialogue. RAF has a Partnerships Officer in post, who has worked throughout the evaluation period supporting regional and sub-regional umbrella organizations. However, FAO's work with CSOs varies from country to country, with some examples of knowledge partnerships but other cases where the relationship remains *ad hoc* or at the service provider level.

ES45. Partnerships with private sector: In its own interviews in the case study countries, the Evaluation Team found only one example of interaction with for-profit private entities – in Nigeria, where the private sector was actively involved in co-ordinating relief response along with the Government. Farmers' organizations are very familiar with FAO in many of the African countries. They report, however, that FAO lacks mechanisms to engage in dialogue with them on issues of concern. The inability of FAO to provide funding except with explicit Government agreement was also noted as an impediment.

ES46. Partnerships with the International Development Community: In terms of the implications of decentralization on FAO's resource partnerships, reference has been made to the promising transition that has begun from emergency support to funding for medium-term resilience work to address some of the underlying causes of food insecurity in Africa. This has been possible for the most part due to the partnerships that have been established between

FAO personnel and local resource partner representatives. Although the emergency programme itself was not decentralized during much of the evaluation period, it was the resource mobilization efforts of the emergency personnel in the countries that were key to the success of the programme. Expanding success in this vein to FAO's development portfolio will be dependent on FAO providing the flexibility and incentives to its development personnel to develop and negotiate programmes with the staff of its development partners who are resident in the country, and who also have decentralized authority from their headquarters.

3.3 *Appropriateness of FAO's Decentralization Model*

ES47. As most UN agencies undertook decentralization exercises at the same time as FAO, the Evaluation carried out a brief comparison among UN agencies in terms of office structure, types of functions decentralized and overall staff balance between headquarters and decentralized offices in order to gain a perspective on how others have approached the process as an input to assessment of the FAO model itself. The six largest organizations engaged in development and humanitarian work, UNDP, WFP, UNICEF, WHO, FAO and ILO, were compared in terms of decentralized office network and relative location of staff between headquarters and the regions. Similar to all but ILO, FAO has followed a one country-one representation approach, which has led to a total of 52 offices in Africa (47 COs, four SROs and one RO). This is slightly more than other agencies, because of the number of sub-regional offices. Despite a large decentralized office network, FAO personnel numbers in Africa are low, as it has retained 62 per cent of its relatively small staff in headquarters (FAO total, regular-budget staff is 3,509).

ES48. The Evaluation Team is aware that there is an ongoing discussion on alternative Country Office models, as has been recommended throughout the evaluation period, but that no firm conclusion has been reached – in part because of resistance by member countries themselves. The advantages of regular, frequent interaction with the variety of national and resident international partners present at the country level are substantial to FAO. The Evaluation Team has taken the position that FAO should strive to maintain the one-country-one representative model as much as possible in light of the advantages that it has.

ES49. In terms of operating modalities within the Country Offices, both UNDP and UNICEF country representatives have the authority to formulate and approve all programmes within their approved country programmes. Both agencies also leave judgment as to whether projects require technical input over and above what is available locally to the head of office. In the event that additional support is needed, the representative is free to obtain it from where he/she believes is the best source. This introduces an element of competition with the in-house technical team which can be healthy. Finally, the comparison has revealed that other agencies have opted for fewer, larger technical teams in the interest of greater skills mix, synergies among its technical officers, and management ease. The Evaluation Team finds these advantages substantial, and applicable to FAO as well. Overall, the Evaluation Team finds FAO's model of decentralization appropriate, with a reservation about the location of technical expertise within the region. The Team believes that there is an imbalance in technical expertise, with too many officers in RAF compared to the MDTs – and too great a dispersal of technical expertise across RAF and the SROs, given existing resources.

4 Conclusions and recommendations

ES50. As noted in the previous sections of this report, very encouraging progress has been made in three areas: priority setting and strategic planning, partnership development, and resource mobilization. Success in other areas of FAO's work in the region has not been as clear, particularly in the major elements of FAO's work – programme design and implementation and technical support.

ES51. Despite the inadequacies thus far in the implementation of decentralization measures, the Evaluation also found very good work in many of the Country Offices. In some cases this is due to the impetus of the emergency response programmes that are now being integrated with development, and the considerable resources and expertise available in the emergency teams that are now benefitting FAO country operations as a whole. In a number of smaller offices the Evaluation encountered dynamic FAORs who are able to make an impact even with small resources. Their success also provides experience upon which to build.

ES52. The Evaluation believes that the decentralization measures thus far taken have not been enough: more needs to be done to strengthen capacity within each type of decentralized office, and also to clarify and strengthen the links between them, so that they effectively support each other and, together with the support and guidance of headquarters, provide a cohesive programme in Africa. The objectives of each decentralized office should be as follows:

- Country Office: To develop and implement cohesive, focused country programmes based on strong partnerships, capitalizing on FAO comparative advantage and expertise.
- Regional Office: To enhance FAO's impact on region-wide issues in strong partnership with regional organizations. To provide oversight and comprehensive, timely administrative and operational support to the decentralized offices in Africa.
- Sub-Regional Offices: To provide responsive technical support aligned to the needs of member countries and RECs.
- Headquarters, with respect to support for the decentralized offices: To provide oversight and clear, streamlined guidance and processes based on the principles of delegated authority and ex-post monitoring.

ES53. While the above is not radically different from the existing formal roles and responsibilities of the different layers of the Organization, in practice achieving these objectives will involve significantly increased support for **capacity development** for delivery, greater attention to the **focus** of the work carried out by the regional and sub-regional offices and a clearer differentiation between them, and a **change in organizational culture** that puts country level support first. Finally, decentralized offices need strong management and **leadership** to create environments where people can work productively.

ES54. Clarity about responsibility and sound capacity are the basis for effective decentralization that moves beyond the command and control mentality to a mindset that encourages innovation and initiative within the agreed Organizational goals and delegated responsibilities. FAO's potential for a more active, dynamic presence within the region is at present substantially constrained by a reluctance to let go of this control, and let the decentralized offices seize opportunities as they arise. If FAO is to increase its impact in Africa, it must change its reputation from being good but slow, able to respond within a four

to six month time frame at best, to an Organization that is dynamic – quick to respond to opportunities to support its partners and able to mobilize its expertise promptly.

ES55. Among the decentralized offices, the Country Offices are the key to achieving the goal of greater impact. Decentralization has tended to focus on the regional and sub-regional offices with little new support to the Country Offices, and this work has often been focused inward, with project implementation and other activities at the regional and sub-regional levels rather than supporting the country level. This has led to a diffusion of FAO's limited resources and a reduced impact overall. The Evaluation Team has formulated a number of specific recommendations to reorient the work of the decentralized offices in order to maximize support to work at the country level, at the same time strengthening critical regional and sub-regional partnerships. Cognizant of the resource constraints upon the Organization, the Evaluation recommendations do not entail substantial increases in resources from FAO's regular budget.

4.1 The Country Offices – for cohesive, focused country programmes

ES56. The Evaluation has identified the following two options to strengthen its country offices for greater impact:

- Undertake a dialogue with its Governing bodies about the relative balance of its resources between headquarters and the regions, to identify what services might be more effectively delivered at decentralized office levels beyond those already decentralized.
- Work within present regular budget allocations to Africa, but a) strengthen operational capacity at the country level through extra-budgetary resource mobilization to increase programme size for greater impact in member countries, b) establish stronger support from the sub-regional technical teams and the Regional Office, and c) further decentralize authorities to better use capacities currently at the disposal of the Organization.

ES57. While the Evaluation Team would welcome any plans to pursue the first option by senior management, it believes that the second option is more feasible in the short run. It also has the possibility of increasing the strength and responsiveness of the Organization overall in the long run.

ES58. Recognizing that the needs and resource potentials at country level vary within the region, the Evaluation identified two different models for strengthening Country Offices within existing regular budget resources:

ES59. Context 1: Countries with substantial need for rehabilitation and development, where voluntary contributions are a possible source of support for development programmes. During its visits to the FAO representations in Africa, the Evaluation Team saw some very promising examples of vibrant programmes with substantial impact funded through voluntary contributions. These programmes are staffed by people who are adept in partnership building, communications and resource mobilization, programme development and negotiation, and rely on country-based technical personnel, and responsive, motivated operational support. The Evaluation believes that this model has further potential in a number of countries with appropriate capacity building.

ES60. Context 2: Countries where substantial voluntary contributions are not likely, but where policy support, adaptation of normative standards and specific, strategic technical interventions are needed. The second strategy proposed by the Evaluation Team is similarly built on existing country examples and is based on intensive use of FAO's high level expertise in headquarters and in the decentralized technical teams to support in-country staff in small COs in the core FAO areas. This approach is based on the use of the Technical Co-operation Programme regular budget resources under streamlined formulation and approval procedures, to lay the foundation for an ongoing dialogue with world-class experts in areas that are priorities for member countries at this time. Such support needs to be flexible, and provided by expertise that is able to spend sufficient time in the countries to understand them well, and draw on their regional and international experience in order to work with national personnel and partners to identify approaches that work well in the local context. While the resource requirements for this strategy are not necessarily large, the need for such work is squarely within FAO's areas of comparative advantage as a United Nations specialized agency. When FAO has demonstrated its ability to deliver this support, mobilizing modest resources to strengthen it might be possible.

ES61. With respect to the two strategies outlined above, the Evaluation has formulated the following recommendations, which are grouped according to the level to which they are directed. We have chosen to begin with the Country Offices, to reinforce their centrality in increasing real and significant impact for the Organization.

Recommendation 1.1: To FAORs with the support of TC and OSD – As a matter of priority, each Country Office undertake an internal review to establish which of the two strategies¹ described above is the most appropriate for the specific Country Office context, and develop an immediate action plan to strengthen FAO impact.

Specific elements of this plan would be:

- a) Identification of the highest priority programme areas in the country on the basis of the newly developed CPFs.
- b) Assessment of resource mobilization potential and formulation of a resource mobilization plan for these priority programme areas.
- c) A technical support plan, specifying agreed inputs from RAF, sub-regional technical teams, and headquarters as necessary. The initial plans should serve as an input to the first sub-regional Management Board meeting (see Recommendation 3.2), inform technical team work planning, and be reviewed and revised annually in subsequent meetings.
- d) Development of communications materials, assuring CO team access to training, to increase office capacity to effectively tell the story of FAO within the country.
- e) Anticipated results from the above should form part of the FAOR's annual report for sustained follow-up within the oversight system.

¹ The first strategy, proposed in contexts where voluntary funding is available, involves the deliberate building of more autonomous country level operational and technical teams with skills in programme development, partnership, communication, and resource mobilization. The second strategy, in resource limited contexts, involves more intensive and responsive application of TCP resources and of FAO's high level expertise in headquarters and in the multi-disciplinary teams to support small country offices in core areas of FAO's work.

Recommendation 1.2: To OSD: In support of the approach proposed by each Country Office, and taking into consideration capacity assessment undertaken in 2011 and 2012 in the Africa region, establish a corporate training programme. Elements of such training would include resource mobilization, project and budget formulation, communication, administration and finance and results-based monitoring.

Recommendation 1.3: To OSD and OSP – Increase the immediate availability of catalytic funding for Country Office support to Government and for programme implementation.

Suggested actions:

- a) The TCP facility should be approved *a priori* and released to the CO at the same time as the biennial budget allotment. The FAOR should apply the TCP facility criteria, as per existing guidelines, in the use of this resource. Ex-post assessment procedures should be exercised to monitor TCP use.
- b) Ensure that the proportion of AOS income destined for the CO is clearly presented and can be used (and carried over) at the country level within and between biennia to ensure that indirect costs related to ongoing projects are fully covered and not drawing resources away from innovative developmental work.

Recommendation 1.4: To OSD and the ADG-RR – Enable and encourage dedicated FAO leadership at country level by rewarding excellent FAOR performance.

Suggested actions:

- a) Establish previous FAO experience as a highly desirable qualification for FAOR posts.
- b) Recognize FAORs who are successfully proactive in their work and, if not already at that level, promote such Representatives to their post grade.
- c) Clearly establish FAOR posts as full-time occupations, avoiding multiple accreditation where possible.
- d) In view of the key position of FAORs in the Organization, restore Regional Representative direct supervision with appropriate support within his/her office.
- e) Where extra-budgetary resources permit, strengthen the senior country management team with a fourth staff member at the same hierarchical level as the Assistant FAOR or, for very large programmes, at the Deputy FAOR level.

Recommendation 1.5: To TC – Country Offices should participate in the formulation of and assume direct responsibility for the country components of sub-regional, regional and global programmes using either delegated authority from the budget-holder, or the “baby” project modality under a central co-ordinating unit, in order to consolidate FAO’s activities in the country and create synergies between the now often disparate elements.

4.2 The Regional Office – for strong regional partnerships and timely Country Office support

Recommendation 2.1: To the ADG-RR – Focus the substantive technical work of the Regional Office on (i) co-ordinating normative work and its policy dimensions and (ii) leadership of the regional dimension of the Organization's technical networks.

Suggested actions:

- a) Commission an independent flagship policy study on an important policy issue within FAO's mandate on a biennial basis, as an input to ARC discussion and to dialogue with other regional partners.
- b) The regional technical officer team should be led by the Deputy Regional Representative. Posts should be re-profiled to focus on conducting cutting edge policy and normative work in the region, and co-ordinating all normative work among the decentralized offices, to ensure that priority areas are selected for normative product development, and that field experience solidly informs their formulation. Regional technical officers should also be responsible for serving as the link between headquarters and regional technical networks and their operation in the region.
- c) Partnership strategies with the AU and other regional organizations should be based on specific plans that focus on mutual priorities of the concerned organization and FAO, have a realistic resource envelope, and be of sufficient priority to national governments that the work is likely to be used or adopted in the foreseeable future.

Recommendation 2.2: To the ADG-RR – Re-profile five of the current professional technical posts in RAF to build capacity to provide a wider range of services to Country Offices and Africa-based governing and statutory bodies.

Suggestions for re-profiled posts:

- a) Training Co-ordinator, to ensure that capacity building needs are assessed and programmes designed and conducted. The Evaluation Team recommends that the following areas of training be the first priority: resource mobilization, communications, project design and implementation – including monitoring and evaluation. The Co-ordinator should also ensure that a schedule of corporate training sessions in FAO's established procedures and policies are held regularly throughout the region for new and existing employees. Funding for training can be sourced in part from the 11% emergency project AOS currently held as a regional reserve.
- b) Resource Mobilization Officer, to support country resource mobilization plans, and to serve as the liaison with TCS in Rome on resource mobilization for prepared proposals. The resource mobilization officer would also work with GEF, to ensure that appropriate projects for GEF financing be identified and proposals prepared.
- c) Communications and Public Information Officer, to support Country Office communications products and plans.
- d) Results Based Management Officer, to head an integrated effort throughout the Country Offices in developing a unified system for monitoring and reporting on results that provides useful information at country and regional levels, as well as meeting reporting requirements to headquarters.
- e) Conference/Event Coordinator, for event management for the organization of meetings of the ARC and Statutory Bodies to reduce the time spent on such matters by senior technical officers.

Recommendation 2.3: To CS – Commission a work organization and performance analysis of the RAF office in order to improve existing capacity in the administration and operations sections for more efficient and effective service.

Suggested actions:

- a) Identify specific gaps in capacity for existing and newly-decentralized responsibilities;
- b) Assess the impact of new systems (GRMS) on workload and skills requirements; and on this basis,
- c) Develop an action plan for improvement.

4.3 *The Technical Teams and the SROs – for responsive support to Country Offices and the RECs*

Recommendation 3.1: To OSD – Increase the size and skill mix of the sub-regional Technical Teams.

Suggested actions:

- a) Readjust the balance between RAF technical posts for normative work and sub-regional teams for policy and technical support by transferring at least four regional technical posts to sub-regional technical/policy teams.
- b) Consolidate technical expertise from the four SROs into two Technical Teams, allowing for a level of geographic and linguistic specificity.
- c) Commission a study on the optimal location of these two Technical Teams in West and Central and East and Southern Africa, in consideration of the following: cost of office establishment, working and travel conditions, and proximity to partners of priority for FAO – including RECs, UN and other development partners. This may also represent an opportunity for management to review the most appropriate location for the Regional Office.
- d) Structurally and functionally integrate personnel of the SREOs within the Technical Teams and charge such personnel with the responsibility of providing technical backstopping to COs on resilience issues. As AOS and TSS income will be needed to maintain the SREOs and teams, such income from sub-regional emergency projects (as for development projects) should be allocated to the SRO and SREO.

Recommendation 3.2: To the ADG-RR – Strengthen Technical Team management arrangements.

Suggested actions:

- a) Release SRCs from FAOR responsibilities, change the designation of SRCs to Technical Team leaders, with team management being their primary function;
- b) Create a Management Board for each Technical Team, led by and comprised primarily of FAORs in their geographic area of work².

² Such a Management Board should be chaired by an FAOR elected by his/her colleagues, with the leader of the technical team as its secretary. The Board would meet for the following purposes: In anticipation of a new CPF cycle, and as soon as the new CPFs have been prepared, the Board would decide upon the skills mix needed within the sub-region in light of the programmes to be undertaken. Subsequently, at the beginning of each year,

Recommendation 3.3: To Regional Technical Officers and members of the sub-regional Technical Teams – Establish broader technical networks that include all FAO technical expertise in the region and expand their use.

Suggested actions:

- a) Technical Teams should maintain and use rosters of all FAO technical personnel (regular programme and project staff/non-staff) within the sub-region for short-term assignments and redeployments – and co-ordinate their use. The roster will facilitate a better use within the networks of available expertise in decentralized offices, especially those working at country level. These personnel are a major complement to the expertise available in RAF and the multi-disciplinary teams.
- b) To free up Technical Team time to focus on COs needing technical support, qualify technical personnel at the lowest level feasible to technically clear project related inputs/outputs in keeping with process streamlining recommended below (Recommendation 4.1).
- c) Overcome disincentives at all levels of decentralized offices for engaging in knowledge exchange and networking, namely hierarchical behaviour and the lack of appropriate corporate mechanisms and procedures to recognize and acknowledge participation in knowledge networks.

4.4 *Headquarters – for efficient oversight of the decentralized office system and clear guidance on corporate processes*

Recommendation 4.1: To CS, OSD and TC – Review and streamline programme cycle procedures.

Suggested actions:

- a) Streamline TCP processes to reduce technical and operational clearances overall.
- b) As the new project cycle management guidelines are rolled out, deliberately seek to identify ways in which processes and procedures might be streamlined. In this respect: (i) specific steps should be taken to eliminate the separate sets of guidelines for project formulation and appraisal for different funding sources; and (ii) a specific review of the business model that has been developed by TCE for the formulation and implementation of extra-budgetary DRR/DRM projects should be carried out with a view to adopting it for development projects.

the Board would assess the performance of the technical team in the past year, recommend any changes to team composition and plan and agree upon the team's workplan for the coming year. In order for the Board to be effective in ensuring that the skills mix is relevant to national priorities contained within the CPFs, the incumbents of these technical posts must be considered mobile, and be able to move according to the needs of the Organization. The Board could meet at the time of the annual sub-regional management team meeting to allow participation by the Regional Representative and others on an observer basis.

Recommendation 4.2: To OSD and OSP – Streamline priority setting and planning processes.

Suggested actions:

- a) Integrate the CPF planning process/cycle more closely with UNDAF preparation, while meeting corporate requirements for planning and reporting within the FAO Strategic Framework.
- b) As CPFs are now in place throughout the region, the practice of developing sub-regional priorities and strategies should be discontinued. Programme documentation regarding collaboration with RECs should serve to identify mutual priorities as the basis for joint work.

Recommendation 4.3: To CS, OSD and CIO – Provide one-stop-shop guidance online on the most current policies, procedures, responsibilities and authorities related to decentralized offices and field programme operations.

Suggested action:

- a) Consolidate all documentation on policies and procedures related to roles responsibilities and authorities for DOs in one on-line location, organized in a user-friendly way, to increase accessibility.

Recommendation 4.4: To the ADG-RR, OSD and CSH – Through better succession planning, introduction of a mobility policy and the abolition of vacancy management as a budget strategy, seek to address the skills mix issue and reduce the chronic vacancies in the region that undermine decentralized offices' capacity.

ES62. Finally, while the time may not yet be appropriate to make a general recommendation regarding headquarters-decentralized offices balance in terms of regular budget and staff resources, the Evaluation would suggest that, as part of the reflection associated with the series of evaluations of FAO's work in the regions, Management, together with the Governing Bodies, carefully consider whether to shift the resource balance further towards decentralized offices in light of their own aspirations to deliver more at country level.

Annex 1: Theory of Change adopted by the Evaluation

