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Responsibilities and procedures for management responses and follow-up reports on evaluations

Guidance note and template

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1 Introduction

1. Evaluation contributes to accountability and lessons learning and should lead to improved management decision-making and performance. For evaluation to play its roles, among other measures and procedures, there needs to be careful consideration of evaluation recommendations as a basis for management decisions.
2. Since 2006, FAO evaluation policy establishes that all evaluations in FAO must receive a Management Response (MR) and a Follow-up report (FR). Standardized and assured quality in the Organization's responses and follow-up reports on evaluations enhances the transparency of the evaluation process and enables drawing lessons on the effectiveness of, and compliance with the corporate evaluation policy. This guidance note outlines the roles and responsibilities for the preparation of these reports.
3. FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) is also aware that the evaluation reports themselves need to facilitate decision by management on recommendations and follow-up. Thus OED, in fulfilling its quality assurance function, will endeavour to ensure that evaluation recommendations are expressed clearly and unambiguously.
4. All queries on these procedures should be addressed to the Director, Office of Evaluation.

2 The Management Response

5. The Management Response is the document in which FAO management, at project, country, regional, division or corporate level:
 - i. expresses its overall opinion about the evaluation and its report, conclusions and usefulness;
 - ii. responds to individual recommendations, either by accepting them fully or partially, or by rejecting them; and
 - iii. describes how it will implement the recommendations that were fully or partially accepted.
6. The unit which has the main responsibility in implementing the work being evaluated (henceforth the Main Unit) takes the lead in preparing the MR, as identified in the Terms of Reference of the evaluation itself. In doing so, the Main Unit must consult those who have a stake in the work being evaluated and obtain the response by those who will have the implementation responsibility for each recommendation. The response to each recommendation will have to be cleared at the level formally responsible for making decisions on the issues at stake. In case of recommendations addressed to the corporate level, the Chair of the Evaluation Committee (Internal) will be responsible for final clearance, in consultation with the members of the Committee as appropriate.
7. The Management Response should be prepared using the format below.

Management response to the Evaluation (Title and date)

Overall response to the evaluation

In this section, Management presents its overall views on the evaluation, the report and its conclusions.

Response by recommendation

In this section, Management should address each recommendation, discussing them in the order presented in the executive summary of the evaluation report. This should be done in the format of the Management Response matrix below (see Box 1) and include:

- The recommendation number and text copied from the evaluation report;
- Indication of whether the recommendation is accepted fully, partially, or rejected;
- Description of the actions to be taken, with comments as required on the conditions to be met during implementation, or on reasons leading to a partial acceptance or rejection of a recommendation;
- The responsible party or FAO unit for implementing the action/s;
- The time-frame for implementation and/or an implementation schedule, if required;
- Indication if further funding from FAO or a resource partner is required for implementing the recommendation.

Box 1. Management response matrix¹

Management response to the (Evaluation Title)					Date
Evaluation Recommendation (a)	Management response (b) Accepted, partially accepted or rejected	Management plan			
		Actions to be taken, and/or comments about partial acceptance or rejection (c)	Responsible unit (d)	Timeframe (e)	Further funding required (Y or N) (f)
Insert title of section, if any					
Recommendation 1	Accepted, partially accepted or rejected	Short narrative			
Recommendation 2	Accepted, partially accepted or rejected	Short narrative			
Recommendation 3	Accepted, partially accepted or rejected	Short narrative			

¹ Each column is cross-referenced to the bullet letters above.

3 The Follow-up Report

8. After one year in the case of project and country evaluations, and two years in the case of thematic and strategy evaluations, the same Main Unit that prepared the MR, should coordinate inputs and prepare a Follow-up Report (FR) on the implementation of the accepted recommendations. The purpose of the Follow-up report is to enhance accountability and lessons learning by informing stakeholders about the outcomes achieved and impact originated through the implementation of the evaluation recommendations. The FR also informs about any variation between actions decided in the Management Response and those actually implemented. The Office of Evaluation contacts the Main Unit for the preparation of the Follow-up Report in due time.

9. In order to standardize reporting, based on the experience of other agencies and a test conducted in 2013-14 by OED, the tool called Management Action Record (MAR) was introduced in the Follow-up Report template. The MAR is the quantitative self-assessment by responsible units **of the progress made in the implementation** of each fully and partially accepted recommendation, through a six-point scoring scale, following the qualifiers in Box 2 below.

Box 2. Qualifiers for the Management Action Record scoring

- 1 - None: no action was taken to implement the recommendation;
- 2 - Poor: plan and actions for implementation of the recommendation are at a very preliminary stage;
- 3 - Inadequate: implementation of the recommendation is uneven and partial;
- 4 - Adequate: implementation of the recommendation has progressed; there is no evidence yet of its results on the intended target;
- 5 - Good: the recommendation has been fully implemented and there is some initial evidence of its impact on the intended target;
- 6 – Excellent: there is solid evidence that the recommendation has had a positive impact on its intended target.

10. The MAR allows OED and FAO to gain a better understanding of good practices and obstacles in the implementation of evaluation recommendations, through the consolidation of quantitative information from all FRs. When OED carries out a validation process of a Follow-up Report, it will enter its own rating of progress made in the implementation of the recommendations. The MAR will also contribute to the tracking system of all recommendations and their implementation, for both accountability and learning purposes, that was established by OED in response to the 2012 External Audit recommendations.

11. The MAR score complements, for each recommendation, the narrative description and the evidence supporting the rating for actions taken and their impact. The Follow-up Report should be prepared using the format below.

12. Furthermore, following a request by the Programme Committee at its 103rd session in April 2010 that Follow-up Reports to evaluations include “*the programme and policy impact stemming from the implementation of the recommendations of evaluation*”, the Impact column was added to the Follow-up matrix. Impact is here defined as the long lasting change directly generated by the actions carried out to implement the specific recommendation.

Follow-up report of the Management response to the Evaluation (Title and date)

Overall progress in the implementation of all accepted recommendations

This section will provide a concise description of main achievements in the implementation of the accepted recommendation, as well as of the obstacles met in the process.

Detailed progress in the implementation of each accepted recommendations

In this section, Management should inform on the progress made in the implementation of each accepted recommendations, fully or partially, as well as on obstacles met in the process. This should be done in the format of the Follow-up report matrix below (see Box 3) and include:

- a. The recommendation number and text, copied from the Management Response;
- b. The actions agreed in the MR, copied from the MAR, possibly in a summary version;
- c. Description of actions actually taken and any comment or information considered useful as supporting evidence to the self-assessment;
- d. MAR score; and
- e. The impact of those actions: impacts can occur at any level, including changes in policies, procedures, technical knowledge, livelihoods, state of natural resources, etc.

Box 3. Follow-up report matrix²

Accepted evaluation recommendations (a)	Action Agreed in the Management Response (b)	Description of actions actually taken, or reasons for actions not taken (c)	MAR score (d) *	Impact of, or changes resulted from taken actions (e)
<i>Recommendation 1</i>	Summary of actions agreed	Short narrative		Short narrative
<i>Recommendation 2</i>	Summary of actions agreed	Short narrative		Short narrative
<i>Recommendation 3</i>	Summary of actions agreed	Short narrative		Short narrative

*: **1 - None**: no action was taken to implement the recommendation; **2 - Poor**: plan and actions for implementation of the recommendation are at a very preliminary stage; **3 - Inadequate**: implementation of the recommendation is uneven and partial; **4 - Adequate**: implementation of the recommendation has progressed; there is no evidence yet of its results on the intended target; **5 - Good**: the recommendation has been fully implemented and there is some initial evidence of its impact on the intended target; **6 – Excellent**: there is solid evidence that the recommendation has had a positive impact on its intended target

² Each column is cross-referenced to the bullet letters above.

4 Responsibilities and procedures for the Management Response and the Follow-up Report

14. OED monitors and facilitates the preparation of the Management Responses and Follow-up Reports. It will notify the Main Unit in due time for the preparation of these reports and will check that required standards of comprehensiveness and clarity are met. It will upload both the MRs and the FRs on its Web site; in the case of evaluations of extra-budgetary funded initiatives, the MRs and the FRs will also be uploaded in FPMIS.
15. In preparing the MRs and the FRs, the Main Unit must consult with and seek inputs as necessary from parties within and outside FAO to whom the evaluation recommendations were addressed. Nevertheless, FAO management takes the full responsibility for the contents of both MR and FRs and for the implementation of agreed actions within its mandate.
16. Operational responsibilities are as follows:
 - a. **Evaluation reports for the Programme Committee:** The Chair of the Evaluation Committee (Internal) designates, in consultation with OED, a senior officer who will have overall responsibility for coordinating the preparation of the Management Response and Follow-up Report. This will be done at the inception stage of the evaluation and indicated in the Roles and Responsibilities section of the evaluation Terms of References. This will enable the designated person to be part of the evaluation Reference Group. The MR should be completed within **four weeks** from the notification by OED and sent to OED Director (see Box 4). The FR should be submitted to the Programme Committee **two years** after the evaluation report and its MR have been discussed by the Programme Committee: eight (8) months prior to the Programme Committee session for which it is due, OED informs the senior officer who coordinated the preparation of the MR about the schedule for the FR preparation and discussion.
 - b. **Project Evaluations:** The project Budget Holder will normally be responsible for leading the preparation of the Management Response and the Follow-up Report to the evaluation. The Management Response and Follow-up Report should be completed within **four weeks** of the notification by OED and sent to OED. The Follow-up Report will be prepared **one year** after the Management Response.
 - c. **Country Evaluations:** The FAO Representative will normally be responsible for leading the preparation of the Management Response and the Follow-up Report to the evaluation. The Management Response and Follow-up Report should be completed within **four weeks** of the request and sent to OED. The Follow-up Report will be prepared **one year** after the Management Response. Governments should be encouraged to provide their own response to the evaluation either separately or as part of the MR. In the case of the latter, it should be explained in the MR which actions were agreed by the Government to undertake.

Box 4. Schedule for the evaluation management responses and follow-up reports to be submitted to the Programme Committee

Action	Responsibility for action	Deadline before PC meeting
Final report of the evaluation and request for the management response will be sent to the appointed senior officer.	Office of Evaluation	12 weeks
Draft management response/follow-up report will be provided by the responsible senior officer to the Evaluation Committee through the Director, Office of Evaluation.	Designated officer/OED	8 weeks
Comments by the Evaluation Committee to the responsible senior officer.	Evaluation Committee	7 weeks
Forwarding of the management response/follow-up report through the PC Secretariat to ODG for clearance before posting.	Designated officer/OED Director	6 weeks