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Foreword

The reporting period 2013-14 was the run-up to the International Year of Evaluation 2015. The underlying current was the increasing recognition, over the last two decades, that the development process is driven by the actions of all - national governments and non-state actors, including civil society and the private sector - and that international assistance can only play a supporting role where concerted action is taken.

Accordingly, the international development partners have been rethinking their programming approach and evaluation methodologies. Many UN agencies are now focusing on capacity development. New evaluation methodologies have emerged, especially during the last few years, which better reflect this approach. The FAO Office of Evaluation also initiated a reform in 2014, focusing more on results achieved particularly at the country level and introducing modern evaluation methodologies, further illustrated later in the report.

Development evaluators are now operating in an environment where the focus of attention is on public sector accountability within the countries, and recognize that their agencies' programmes must be assessed within the broader context of national policy impact. Accordingly, the idea of an International Year emerged from the network of national evaluation associations, aided by the international partners in 2013, followed by UN agencies in early 2014 and later by evaluation functions of national governments, and finally recognized by the UN General Assembly in December 2014.

This external landscape has evolved in conjunction with a broader FAO transformational process to improve its support to the needs of member countries through *inter alia* the decentralization of programming and technical support functions from headquarters to regional and country offices and the approval of FAO's reviewed Strategic Framework focusing the programme of work on five strategic objectives inspired by global trends and challenges and taking account of FAO's essential functions and comparative advantages.

Conducting evaluation in this broader context has promoted an intensification of dialogue and effective collaboration with management and colleagues at all levels, as well as stakeholders in member countries and has promoted the value and use of evaluations both internally in FAO and also at the country level.

The Office of Evaluation looks forward to continuing collaboration with all our stakeholders and FAO Members in this regard.

Masahiro Igarashi
Director
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1. Introduction

1. The 2015 Programme Evaluation Report highlights the main findings from evaluations conducted by the Office of Evaluation (OED) and presents the activities of the Office and reforms introduced in the period 2013-14.
2. In this period, OED carried out nine thematic and strategic evaluations,¹ four country programme evaluations and 49 project evaluations, and it prepared two syntheses of previous evaluations, on middle-income countries (MICs) and on decentralized offices. In addition, OED supported the independent review of the governance reforms carried out following the 2007 Independent External Evaluation (IEE) of FAO.
3. Section 2 provides some of the main findings emerging from evaluations. Section 3 describes the activities of OED during the biennium and changes introduced following the arrival of the new Director in 2014, with greater focus on results to better support FAO in delivering its mandate. Section 4 is about partnerships in evaluation, including strengthened collaboration with the UN system. Section 5 is a brief summary of the way forward for the 2015-16 biennium. Annex 1 presents briefs for each of the thematic and strategic evaluations and Annex 2 presents the OED reform agenda.

2. Main findings from the evaluations

4. Important findings and themes emerged from the thematic and strategic, country and project evaluations completed in this period, taken both individually and under the cross-cutting areas.²

2.1 *FAO's support to investment for agriculture*

5. The ***evaluation of FAO's role in investment for food and nutrition security, agriculture and rural development*** found that the Organization's work in providing technical and economic advice to governments on policies and legislation that influence public and private investment has been significant at the global level. FAO has furthermore demonstrated ability in gathering a wide range of stakeholders to engage in discussion platforms on aspects of investment for agriculture, at country and regional levels. However, it is recommended that the Organization enhance capacity in decentralized offices at country level, particularly through adequate provision of human resources and

¹ Evaluations of:

- FAO's role and work in disaster risk reduction in Asia and in Latin America and the Caribbean;
- FAO's role in investment for food and nutrition security, agriculture and rural development;
- FAO's role in support of crop production;
- FAO's contribution in crisis-related transition;
- FAO's Regional and Subregional Offices for Africa;
- FAO's Regional and Subregional Offices for Europe and Central Asia;
- FAO's Regional and Subregional Offices for Latin America and the Caribbean;
- FAO's Regional and Subregional Offices for Asia and the Pacific; and
- FAO/WFP joint evaluation of food security cluster coordination in humanitarian action.

² For the thematic, strategic and country synthesis evaluations, greater detail is presented in the briefs in Annex 1.

improved cross support between its policy and technical divisions. FAO's work in building government capacity to develop multi-sector strategies and investment plans aligned with country priorities would also need strengthening in investment.

6. The evaluation also showed that there was a strong performance of FAO's work in defining, disseminating and tracking the adoption of global standards related to the safety, quality and socio-economic value of investment. FAO also demonstrated good work in helping to design and implement investment for agriculture in partnership with international financing institutions (IFIs) such as the World Bank, regional banks and IFAD. The evaluation noted that FAO still retains an unrivalled advantage: the legacy of the skills and the knowledge it commands. These skills, if fully harnessed, offer the Organization the possibility of maintaining a pre-eminent position in support to investment in agricultural development.

2.2 FAO's support to crop production

7. The **evaluation of FAO's role in support of crop production** found that FAO's activities in this area are well appreciated by member countries and partners. The evaluation recommended that FAO's support to crop production would benefit from the balancing of technical expertise requirements relating to crop production in the field with preserving a critical mass at the global level and from more strategic orientation and continuity. The evaluation revealed that FAO's work in crops had lost some technical quality and recommends that for this priority area for the Organization, FAO's support to agricultural research, innovation and technological development for crops be increased.
8. Noting that 57 percent of FAO's activities in crops are implemented under emergency funding, the evaluation suggests that the Organization should further link emergency work to its development activities. FAO should also enhance its strategic use of partnerships, including with the CGIAR.

2.3 FAO's work on resilience and emergency response

9. OED conducted a number of resilience and emergency-related evaluations, either concerning thematic areas (transition, disaster risk reduction and food security cluster coordination) or countries in crisis (Afghanistan and Somalia). Overall, the evaluations rated FAO's performance as most successful and a number of recommendations for further improvement were formulated.
10. The **evaluation of FAO's contribution to crisis-related transition** found that FAO was set in the right direction in the area of transition work and highlighted the Organization's comparative advantage in this regard. FAO has developed skills that allow it to put its technical support to work in all the critical phases of a crisis, whether it be in sudden-onset or protracted crises. Especially under its new "Resilience agenda" within the mandate of Strategic Objective 5, FAO has a comparative advantage in overcoming the humanitarian-development divide in crisis response. The evaluation recommends that FAO further expand its potential technical contributions to transition targeting the poor and the most vulnerable. The evaluation notes the political neutral approach by FAO in

issues of conflict and peace, but finds that in these situations, food security and food production have a huge potential in supporting the return of stability and peace. The evaluation also calls for further refinement of Country Programming Frameworks to allow the flexibility needed in work on crisis-related transition.

11. The ***evaluation of FAO's role and work on disaster risk reduction*** recommends that FAO strengthen its capacity in disaster risk management, particularly in country offices, to mainstream risk reduction strategies for agriculture in national policies keeping in sight the absorptive capacity of government counterparts. FAO has become more active in joint coordination mechanisms and UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) processes, and is engaged in joint risk-reduction programmes with other UN agencies. In Asia, FAO's capacity to link local-level experiences to national policy dialogue was valued by member countries and partners.
12. The ***FAO/WFP joint evaluation of food security cluster coordination in humanitarian action*** concludes that coordination brings clear benefits to humanitarian organizations in terms of food security coverage, reducing duplication, introducing standards, facilitating networks and building trust. Collection, exchange and reporting of information are working well, but monitoring systems need to be improved. An important result is that consolidated appeals and response plans are more strategic, comprehensive and inclusive. Nevertheless, coordination requires significant investment in terms of resources and time and the evaluation found that insufficient support and capacity are provided at national and global levels.
13. The country evaluations of ***Afghanistan*** and ***Somalia*** found FAO's programmes very relevant. In Somalia, FAO's programme approach, based on pooled funding, was singled out as good practice and FAO successfully scaled up its programme, adapted well to the context of failed formal governance, and supported planning and decision-making by national and international stakeholders through food security analysis and information. In Afghanistan, FAO's projects made a significant contribution to food security, food production and increasing incomes of project beneficiaries. For Afghanistan, the evaluation noted that FAO's programme for capacity development was insufficient and that the Country Programming Framework was launched without adequate alignment with UNDAF and government's priority programmes.

2.4 Regional and Subregional Offices – FAO's decentralization

14. Overall, FAO has made good progress towards a more inclusive and harmonized management model across the whole Organization, from headquarters to the country offices. Enhancements to the FAO decentralized office network since 2010 have led to improved services to member countries. Questions remain on the location of some regional and subregional offices, as well as on the adequacy of host country arrangements in high- and upper-middle-income countries.
15. However, the most difficult challenge still remains finding the right balance between the global priorities and the local needs and expectations of FAO's 197 Members. As both shareholders of a global knowledge organization with a wide technical mandate, and

recipients or supporters of FAO's technical support at the country level, Members often have conflicting priorities for the Organization depending on the context. Nonetheless, the evaluations found that recent corporate reforms and improvements in institutional procedures have strengthened coherence. Improvements in the quality of Country Programming Frameworks should be pursued in order to achieve strategic coherence between global and country levels.

16. The gradual increase in technical and financial capacity of decentralized offices has helped to provide more timely and relevant assistance, although progress has been uneven among the regions. Achievement of desirable levels and mix of skills and of adequate capacity in resource mobilization also remains a challenge.

2.5 *FAO's cooperation in middle-income countries*

17. The synthesis of the evaluations of FAO's cooperation with Armenia, Colombia, Sri Lanka and Vietnam highlights that FAO is widely appreciated for its technical capacity and the quality of its normative products. Programmes are relevant and aligned with government priorities, and projects are effective in achieving planned outcomes. FAO is responding to some issues identified in the synthesis, such as the profile of FAO country representatives and insufficient delegation of authority and resources to the country offices. The synthesis also recommends that country offices better integrate FAO's global goals into their programmes and enhance policy influence and capacity development.
18. Since FAO's resources only cover limited core staff, the country offices sought extra-budgetary funds to enhance their visibility. This trend has led them to engage in too many projects, where budgets and operational aspects prevailed over the objectives of technical and policy assistance. The countries assessed have their own implementation capacity, and would derive greater benefit from high-level policy and technical support. Responding to government requests or donor priorities in order to expand the project portfolio ensured relevance and visibility, but it was not always found to bring overall strategic impact.

2.6 *Independent review of FAO governance reforms*

19. Following the 2007 Independent External Evaluation (IEE) of FAO, the FAO Conference approved the Immediate Plan of Action for FAO Renewal (IPA), which included a series of reforms to FAO's governance system. An independent review of these reforms was conducted as planned during 2014 and assessed the changes to the functioning of FAO's governing bodies, to their programme of work, their cost, and their oversight functions, among others. It found that progress has been considerable, and that 102 IPA actions had been implemented. Definition of governing body responsibilities and workflow are now clearer in FAO's Basic Texts, and meetings are now better structured. Accountability of the Secretariat to Members has been strengthened, and trust between them and among Members themselves has largely been re-established. The review found that FAO needed a more focused approach to its global role. It also found that in their new role as governing bodies, the regional conferences should focus their priority-setting at a higher level of the Strategic Framework, and base it on more detailed information on results achieved and resources available. The technical committees needed stronger bureaux and steering committees which would be more active during the inter-sessional period.

2.7 Project evaluations

20. Overall, projects evaluated were found to be relevant and their focus well related to their respective plans and frameworks. On average, project implementation processes were considered satisfactory, producing expected outputs and achieving expected outcomes. Despite often poor design, projects delivered what they intended. Almost half of them were rated 'good' or 'excellent' in terms of output and outcome delivery, as well as on sustainability, and on actual or potential contributions to FAO's goals. The majority of projects were found satisfactory in the areas of capacity development, FAO rights-based approaches, and partnerships and alliances.
21. In the areas for improvement, the evaluations noted that the quality of logical frameworks was often inadequate, especially on project design, including inadequate theories of change, timeframes and budgets. Other areas identified for improvement were the development and implementation of exit strategies; timeliness in project implementation; economic and financial sustainability; feedback loops on use and impact of normative and knowledge products; integration of environmental sustainability; capacity development at the organizational and enabling environment levels; and gender considerations.

2.8 Gender

22. Since 2013, OED has been conducting internal gender peer reviews of its evaluations, and gender stock-taking exercises on a yearly basis. The stock-taking is to contribute to the UN System-Wide Action Plan (UNSWAP) assessment;³ to draw conclusions and lessons about gender in evaluations; and to assess gender mainstreaming in FAO's work. In late 2014, OED adopted the five principles of the FAO gender policy as standard criteria for assessing gender equality.
23. The OED gender peer review process has led to greater consideration of gender dimension in evaluations. This is now included in evaluation terms of reference and reports. Evaluation recommendations focusing on mainstreaming gender were in general well accepted, which exhorted continued efforts toward mainstreaming gender in FAO's activities,⁴ including in evaluations themselves, and should be pursued.

2.9 Capacity development

24. Compared to the previous biennium, assessment of capacity development has been incorporated more systematically in evaluations, reflecting the progressive institutionalization of the FAO capacity development approach across strategic objectives, programmes and projects. However, despite the progress made, assessing the outcome of capacity development remains a challenge.

³ The UNSWAP is a plan to improve gender equality and the empowerment of women across the UN system.

⁴ The interventions were assessed against FAO Gender Policy principles

25. At the country level, FAO is perceived as a technical organization, and stakeholders usually expect support on ‘technical issues’ rather than on organizational functioning and performance (e.g. mandates of ministries, etc.). Furthermore, in projects with a duration of 2 to 3 years, the focus tends to be on developing the capacities at the individual level. Therefore, including activities to strengthen institutions and the enabling environment remains a challenge.
26. FAO has developed a number of good practices in capacity development, and should continue to promote their uptake in project and programme design. These include for instance the systematic integration of contextual capacity assessment in projects, and the integration of a capacity-based exit strategy for greater sustainability.

3. A renewed FAO Office of Evaluation

3.1 Reform process

27. The biennium was a period of transition for the FAO Office of Evaluation with the arrival of a new Director. Under him, OED has started a process of reform, in consultation with senior management and with guidance from the Programme Committee, to improve the utility and consistency of its evaluations and to better contribute to FAO’s ability to achieve its objectives. This includes a tightened focus on evaluating results and better alignment of evaluation with the corporate Strategic Framework.
28. As the first step in the reform process, OED has established a reform agenda⁵ and defined its overall goal:
FAO and its partners contribute effectively to the sustainable reduction of poverty and hunger, in alignment with FAO’s agreed goals and Strategic Objectives. To this end, OED aims to provide credible, useful and evidence-based evaluations that feed into the policy and practice of FAO and its partners.
29. In order to achieve this goal, OED has committed to three outcomes:
- i. *OED staff designs, directs and ensures the use of a majority of thematic and country programme evaluations;*
 - ii. *OED staff designs and conducts all its evaluations with a results focus; and*
 - iii. *OED staff involves stakeholders, including national governments for country programmes and major project evaluations, appropriately and systematically.*
30. OED has identified a number of outputs and activities to achieve these outcomes. Priorities for 2014 were to rebalance the evaluation portfolio, ensure the coherence of evaluation methodology, and enhance staff capacity.

⁵ See Annex 2 for the detailed logframe.

3.2 Refocusing evaluations and rebalancing the portfolio

31. As presented to the Programme Committee at its November 2014 session, a key reform has been to change the balance and mix of the evaluation portfolio to improve the quality and timing of the intelligence provided to the Organization and governing bodies. In addition, most of the thematic evaluations initiated in 2014 were given additional time to better focus on results, which requires more field research.
32. OED is undertaking an increased number of country evaluations, recognizing that results are happening at the national level, whether through field projects or through the use of global public goods provided by FAO. It is making a concerted effort to provide stronger evidence through analysis of impact on ultimate beneficiaries and on national institutions. Country programme evaluations (CPEs) are now timed to match the Country Programming Framework cycle. The two purposes of country programme evaluations are to support FAO's accountability to the government, development partners and beneficiaries, and to contribute to learning at the country, regional and corporate levels. The evaluations assess results achieved at country level and the strategic relevance of FAO's country programmes. This will contribute to the better design of new country programmes. A crucial effort is also being made to promote stakeholder engagement and enhanced ownership at the national level, especially with evaluation units within government.
33. To strengthen this work on country programme evaluations, OED has developed a guidance note that is being tested in the country evaluations undertaken in 2014-15.

3.3 Ensuring coherence of evaluation methodologies and enhancing staff skills

34. One of the major challenges for the first year of reform was to update and upgrade the methodologies used in evaluations, ensure their coherence across evaluations and upgrade the knowledge and skills of OED evaluators in their application. For this, the first action taken was to organize a two-day OED workshop in May 2014 for staff to be aware of the need for methodological upgrading and coherence, to internalize the reform process, and to come up with an action plan.
35. Subsequently, starting from June 2014, a learning week is organized every two-three months, in which all staff participates in designated learning activities, including some organized jointly with other Rome-based agencies. The topics taken up in the learning weeks include the following:
 - Gender analysis in evaluations of agriculture and food and nutrition security (joint training with IFAD, WFP and CGIAR evaluation units)⁶;
 - Evaluating humanitarian action (joint training with WFP evaluation office);
 - New methodology in evaluating complexity: outcome harvesting (joint training with IFAD evaluation office);

⁶ <http://www.fao.org/evaluation/video/en/>

- Country evaluations: process and methodology;
 - Participatory rural appraisal: methods for evaluating qualitative impact;
 - Quantitative impact evaluation methods;
 - Integrating capacity development perspectives in evaluations;
 - Practical tools for stakeholder analysis; and
 - Soft-skills enhancement for conducting evaluations and stakeholder engagement.
36. A new OED evaluation manual was completed and shared among the staff evaluators in August 2014. This document is being regularly revised with the knowledge gained from learning activities.
37. OED is improving preparation of follow-up reports on implementation of evaluation recommendations. To improve consistency, a tool for tracking progress in implementation has been introduced. A 'management action record' scoring system was added to the mandatory information in follow-up reports, to harmonize information and to improve lesson learning.
38. Project evaluations, which are by far the largest portfolio in terms of number of evaluations, are also linked and coordinated with thematic, strategic and country evaluations whenever possible.

3.4 Strengthening in-house collaboration

39. Since introducing the reform agenda, OED has been collaborating with all units of the Organization, and with the Office of the Inspector General to avoid duplication of efforts and make efficient use of resources within the oversight functions of the Organization. OED has increased collaboration with a number of divisions focusing on corporate support to results, as well as with monitoring and evaluation staff in decentralized offices.
40. In particular, collaboration will continue with the Office of Support to Decentralization on the alignment and synergies between the Country Programming Framework planning and reporting cycles and country evaluations; and with the Office of Strategic Planning on various aspects of results-based management guidance, methods and monitoring/reporting. Content related exchanges have also been initiated with the Strategic Objective teams – supported by the identification of focal points both in OED and in the Strategic Objective teams. This aspect of the work will be strengthened and made more systematic in the next biennium.
41. Furthermore there has been an effort to engage with country offices and FAO Representatives beyond the immediate focus of specific evaluations. In 2014, OED made a concerted effort to increase collaboration with decentralized offices by sharing information more systematically with the monitoring and evaluation network based in the Africa regional, subregional and country offices, engaging more directly through presentations and dialogue. OED is also attempting to identify evaluation champions and focal points throughout the decentralized offices beyond the Africa region.

42. Smooth and systematic coordination with the Office of the Inspector General - initiated in the previous biennium - has continued throughout 2013-14 with exchanges of work plans, strategic information and further plans to increase collaboration and consultation.

3.5 Financial resources for evaluation

43. The table below shows the cost of the thematic and strategy evaluations completed in the period 2013-2014⁷. Financial resources mostly originated from the OED share of the corporate net appropriation, whereas the evaluations of FAO's work in disaster risk reduction and of FAO's work in post-crisis transition were funded from the emergency evaluation trust fund. The amounts below do not include the cost of OED staff involved in managing and conducting the evaluations.

Table 1. Funding for evaluations presented to governing bodies

EVALUATIONS 2013-14	USD
Evaluation of FAO's role in investment for food and nutrition security, agriculture and rural development	USD 490,000
Evaluation of FAO's work in disaster risk reduction in Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean	USD 610,000
Evaluation of FAO's regional and sub-regional offices for Africa	USD 486,584
Evaluation of FAO's regional and sub-regional offices for Asia and the Pacific	USD 497,431
Evaluation of FAO's regional and sub-regional offices for Latin America and the Caribbean	USD 527,592
Evaluation of FAO's work in sustainable intensification of crops	USD 490,000
FAP/WFP joint evaluation of food security cluster coordination in humanitarian action*	USD 162,000
Evaluation of FAO's work in post-crisis transition	USD 560,000
Independent review of FAO governance reforms**	USD 153,000

*This represents 50% of the overall cost of the evaluation; the remaining 50% was contributed by WFP Office of Evaluation

** The budget of the independent review of FAO governance reforms was approved by Council at its 148th session in December 2013.

44. In November 2013, a revised policy was endorsed and integrated in the new FAO project cycle guide manual, for evaluation provisions for voluntary-funded initiatives. As foreseen in the policy, the two existing trust funds for evaluations of emergency and rehabilitation operations and development initiatives were merged in 2014 into one single evaluation trust fund. As of December 2014, out of 574 operationally active voluntary-funded projects with a budget above USD 200,000: 230 initiatives had provisions for separate evaluations, 222 initiatives had provisions for contributing to the trust fund, 53 did not comply with the policy and for the remaining 69, an evaluation was not required. The trend shows an increase in the evaluation coverage of voluntary-funded initiatives. However, it also demonstrates the need for greater collaboration from a number of resource partners in implementing the new arrangement.

⁷ This was a specific request formulated at the 2013 Conference by member countries.

4. Collaboration with the UN system

4.1 Rome-based agencies

45. In the spring of 2013, a memorandum of understanding with the evaluation units of the three Rome-based UN agencies and the CGIAR Independent Evaluation Arrangement was signed, providing a broad framework to promote closer collaboration amongst the four units. This resulted in the elaboration of a joint statement with a commitment to:
- share and promote good practices with respect to challenging aspects of evaluating food and agriculture work in development and humanitarian context;
 - achieve efficiency gains;
 - increase effectiveness including to widen the possible transformational impact based on evaluation work; and
 - respond to the governing bodies' requests that the four agencies work closely.
46. In addition, some forms of collaboration, like peer reviews, were identified to enhance the credibility of evaluations and provide an opportunity to benefit from an outside perspective and to make progress in the harmonization of evaluation methods.
47. The new collaboration between the agencies has resulted in several joint initiatives, including joint evaluations and synthesis of evaluations,⁸ training and events, and the joint engagement to organize a technical seminar in Rome for the 2015 Year of Evaluation focusing on “enhancing the evaluability of Sustainable Development Goal 2”.

4.2 UNEG

48. The principles of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) and its norms and standards inform OED's Charter. UNEG's mission is to: i) promote the independence, credibility and usefulness of the evaluation function and evaluation across the UN system; ii) advocate for the importance of evaluation for learning, decision-making and accountability; and iii) support the evaluation community in the UN system and beyond.
49. In 2013 and 2014, OED actively contributed to UNEG's work through direct participation in following task forces and working groups: i) completion of UNEG guidelines on impact evaluation; ii) completion of UNEG guidelines on evaluation of normative work; iii) completion of UNEG guidelines on human rights and gender equality in evaluation; iv) peer reviews for the improvement of the evaluation function in the UN; v) professionalization of the evaluation function; vi) enhanced use of evaluations for strategic decision making and organizational learning; and vii) organization of high-level events in support to the International Year of Evaluation. OED also contributes to UNEG's yearly evaluation seminars and meetings.

⁸ In 2014, WFP and FAO completed the joint evaluation of the food security cluster; FAO and IFAD initiated the joint synthesis on IFAD/FAO engagement with pastoral development (2003-2013); and FAO, WFP, UNICEF and WHO a joint evaluation of renewed effort against child hunger and under-nutrition (REACH).

4.3 Coordination for emergency response evaluations

50. OED was closely involved in the inter-agency humanitarian evaluations (IAHE) led by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in the context of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's (IASC) transformative agenda. The transformative agenda changed the way humanitarian evaluations are conducted: the principle of real-time evaluations was abandoned in favour of two distinct activities: (i) operational peer reviews to be conducted within three months of the declaration of a level 3 (L3) emergency; and (ii) IAHEs to be completed at the 12-month mark in L3 emergencies. OED participated in the IAHE steering group and management group particularly for the Philippines evaluation (the only one conducted in 2014) and concluded that, as the evaluation was mainly concerned with process and coordination issues, an agency-specific evaluation of FAO's response was still needed. OED remains an active participant in the IAHE process, and will contribute to the revision of the guidelines in 2015-16.
51. OED has continued to be the FAO focal point in ALNAP (a humanitarian evaluation and learning global consortium) and participated in annual meetings, presenting some of the OED evaluation work. The main effort in the biennium has been to ensure that other FAO teams in headquarters and decentralized offices also become more actively engaged in some of ALNAP's joint learning and action research activities as well as taking part in the annual meetings.

5. Evaluation programme: rationale and overview

52. The rolling evaluation workplan for 2015-2017,⁹ approved by the Programme Committee at the end of 2014, reflects the OED reform agenda – to provide the Committee and other stakeholders of the Organization with more information and analysis of results achieved in the field and at the country level. Thematic evaluations will be aligned to the Strategic Objectives of the Organization, taking up one Strategic Objective every half a year. A new series of country programme evaluations will pay more attention to the achievement of outcomes as defined in Country Programming Frameworks – five to seven such evaluations are planned for each year. The inter-agency humanitarian evaluations are complemented with an impact assessment of FAO emergency assistance. OED will proactively engage in joint evaluations when opportunities arise. Finally, as mandated by the governing bodies, there will be an independent evaluation of FAO's evaluation function in 2015-2016.
53. Below are two tables presenting the indicative evaluation plan for the next four years (2015-18) – inclusive of all evaluation categories. The Programme Committee has endorsed the plan for major evaluations for the 2015-16 biennium.

⁹ PC 116/5; CL 150/5

Table 2. Evaluations for the Programme Committee

Thematic and strategic evaluations	Year(s) conducted
Spring 2015 session	
Synthesis report of evaluations of regional and subregional offices	2014
Autumn 2015 session	
Evaluation of FAO's contribution to knowledge on food, agriculture and natural resources	2014-2015
Evaluation of FAO's contribution to climate change adaptation and mitigation	2014-2015
Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources for food and agriculture	2014-2015
Spring 2016 session	
Autumn 2016 session	
Evaluation of FAO's contribution to inclusive and efficient agricultural and food systems (SO 4)	2015-2016
Evaluation of FAO's evaluation function	2015-2016
Spring 2017 session	
Evaluation of FAO's contribution to elimination of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition (SO 1)	2015-2016
Autumn 2017 session	
Evaluation of FAO's contribution to increase the resilience of livelihoods to disasters (SO 5)	2016-2017
Spring 2018 session	
Evaluation of FAO's contribution to integrated natural resource management for sustainable agriculture (SO 2)	2016-2017
Synthesis of lessons learned in application of the Country Programme Framework	2017
Autumn 2018 session	
Evaluation of FAO's contribution to reduction in rural poverty (SO 3)	2016-2017

Table 3. Other evaluations underway in 2015 and beyond

Evaluations	Year(s) conducted
Country Programme Evaluations	
Country programme evaluation in Burkina Faso	2014-2015
Country programme evaluation in Guyana	2015
Country programme evaluation in Kyrgyzstan	2015
Country programme evaluation in Lao PDR	2014-2015
Country programme evaluations in selected Caribbean countries (tentative title)	2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Five to seven country programme evaluations are planned to be conducted annually. The countries will be selected each year from those completing the CPF cycle in consultation with relevant offices. 	
Inter-agency humanitarian evaluations and OED follow-up assessments¹⁰	
Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation and OED follow-up assessment of Typhoon Haiyan emergency operations	2014-2015
Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation and OED follow-up assessment of emergency operations in South Sudan	2015-2016
Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation and OED follow-up assessment of emergency operations in Central African Republic	2015-2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These evaluations are triggered by system-wide emergency declarations, which are not predictable. However, OED is prepared to participate in one to three such evaluations each year with different degrees of involvement. 	
Joint and other evaluations	
IPPC Secretariat Enhancement Evaluation	2014
Joint IFAD-FAO evaluation synthesis on pastoral development	2014-2015
Joint Evaluation of the UN partnership for renewed effort against child hunger and under-nutrition (REACH)	2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These evaluations originate from external requests or inter-agency consultations, and hence not predictable much in advance. However, OED is prepared to conduct or support one to two such evaluations each year. 	
Project evaluations	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately 30 to 40 project evaluations are planned to be conducted each year. The evaluations are triggered by requests/inquiries from the programme offices. 	

¹⁰ Inter-agency humanitarian evaluations and OED's follow-up assessments will be decided on a case-by-case basis following the declaration of Level 3 in countries where FAO will have a significant response programme.

OED Brief: Evaluation of FAO's role in investment for food and nutrition security agriculture and rural development

FAO Office of Evaluation

PER 2015

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- *All FAO evaluations and management responses are public documents and can be found on: <http://www.fao.org/evaluation/oed/en/>*
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Background

The compelling need for more food and more food security for a growing global population in a context of high and volatile food prices, has dramatized the need for more investment in agriculture. New and old actors are engaging in new ways to meet the challenges of sustainably increasing access to food by 50 percent before 2020, while reducing rural poverty and seeking to banish hunger and increasing food security. Investment in agriculture is thus rising and FAO has the mandate to support this effort. With this in mind, the Programme Committee, at its 108th session in October 2011, asked the Organization to undertake an evaluation of its past performance and current potential role in supporting investment in agriculture.

Scope and Methodology

This evaluation examines the role of FAO as a whole in supporting investment. The evaluation, however limits its field of investigation to the support FAO does or should provide to investments by governments, international financing institutions and the corporate private sector that advance food and nutrition security, agriculture and rural development (FNSARD). The analysis pays special attention to the FAO Investment Centre Division (TCI), because of its key role in FAO's support to investment, and the fact that it has never been the subject of an FAO evaluation. In this sense, the evaluation focuses on the institutional processes – the role, organization, capacities and ways – through which FAO supports investment.

The evaluation draws on different methodologies including documentation review, interviews with a wide range of key stakeholders, stakeholder surveys, and 12 different country visits to decentralized offices.

Findings and Conclusions

The evaluation found that FAO's progress and performance of support to investment in FNSARD has been mixed.

FAO has not been playing a leading role in developing new partnerships and has neglected the important role being played by the private sector. Considering its mandate, and the current context of evolving global public-private partnerships and platforms in FNSARD, FAO lags behind in terms of playing a constructive

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role in the design of international development partnerships concerned with investment. FAO has nonetheless demonstrated an ability in gathering certain stakeholders to engage in discussion platforms on aspects of FNSARD, at country and regional levels.

The Organization's work in providing technical and economic advice to governments on policies and legislation which influence public and private investment, although significant at the global level, has been poor in decentralized offices at the country level. Due to human resources constraints and weak cross support between policy and technical divisions of the Organization, FAO's work in building government capacity to construct and implement multi-sector strategies and investment plans aligned with country priorities, has been only partly satisfactory.

The evaluation, however, measured a strong performance of FAO's work in defining, disseminating and tracking the adoption of global standards related to the safety, quality and social economic value of investment. Despite some internal shortcomings, FAO also demonstrated satisfactory work in helping to design and implement FNSARD investment, particularly investments supported by international financing institutions (IFI).

Nevertheless, FAO still retains an unrivalled advantage, the legacy of the skills and the knowledge it commands. These skills if fully harnessed, offer the Organization the return to a pre-eminent position in support of investment in agricultural development.

Recommendations

Building on its primary organizational and operational strengths, FAO should work toward the five main recommendations of the evaluation within the framework of internal reform currently being undertaken by the Organization. The five main recommendations, which essentially call upon FAO to strengthen its strategy, capacity building capabilities and partnerships in investment for FNSARD, were widely accepted by the Programme Committee.

- (1) Develop a partnership-based corporate strategy for investment support that sets clear goals for increased and more effective public and private investment in FNSARD.
- (2) Establish strengthened external strategic and operational partnerships with the private sector and international financing institutions (IFI) to better support investment for FNSARD.
- (3) Strengthen cross-divisional action, working as 'One FAO', in support of FNSARD investment. These actions should include making support to investment a core function, improving internal work planning mechanisms and removing the financial and other disincentives that restrict cross-divisional work.
- (4) Strengthen work on increasing country capacity in all aspects of the investment cycle in FNSARD.
- (5) Expand and strengthen the role of the FAO Investment Centre Division in supporting FNSARD investment.

OED Brief: Evaluation of FAO's role in support of crop production

FAO Office of Evaluation

PER 2015

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- *All FAO evaluations and management responses are public documents and can be found on: <http://www.fao.org/evaluation/oed/en/>*
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Background

Support to crops represents an important component in FAO's efforts to achieve its global goals. This evaluation was originally meant to look at the Organization's performance in supporting crop production under the previous Strategic Framework, specifically Strategic Objective A: "Sustainable intensification of crop production". However, since the member countries' request for this evaluation in 2010, FAO has undergone significant changes, including the adoption of a new Strategic Framework which incorporates all production activities (crops, livestock, forestry and fisheries) into a more integrated ecosystem services approach¹¹.

The evaluation assesses FAO's support to crop production and utilizes it as an opportunity to provide recommendations for the implementation of FAO's new vision in providing technical assistance in this field. The evaluation assumes that the recommendations made are of relevance not only for FAO's work in crops, but also in the other technical areas.

Scope and Methodology

The evaluation is a formative assessment, which took place parallel to the ongoing process through which FAO was transforming its Strategic Framework. For the purpose of this evaluation, "crops" is taken to include all activities related to plant production (agricultural productivity, crop protection, managing biodiversity and ecosystem services, and strengthening livelihoods), focusing mainly on global and country level enabling environments and policy support. The evaluation covers the 2007-2013 period.

The evaluation draws on different methodologies including a review of key documents and past evaluations, visits to eight case study countries, questionnaires to FAO staff and external stakeholders and visits and interviews with key donors, bilateral and multilateral development cooperation agencies.

Findings and Conclusions

Although the evaluation found that FAO's activities in support of crop production were largely well received by member countries and partners, a closer look at the crop support programme has shown that FAO's support to crop production has been fragmented and requires more strategic orientation and continuity.

¹¹ This approach is embodied within FAO's Strategic Objective 2: "Make agriculture, forestry and fisheries more productive and sustainable".

The evaluation observed a growing concern that FAO's work in support of crop production has lost a significant degree of the technical quality that once characterized it, with significant deterioration of FAO's crop production support to national agricultural research, extension and innovations systems over the past decade. The evaluation found that it was necessary for FAO to review its support to agricultural research, innovation and technological development for crops, as well as to prioritize the rebuilding of the technical capacities of its human resources basis.

Furthermore, the evaluation found that FAO is missing opportunities by not fully exploiting some areas of its work and resources. This is the case for FAO's emergency work; although 57 percent of FAO's activities in crops are implemented under emergency funding, the Organization does not fully exploit this aspect to its development activities. Moreover, FAO should make more strategic use of its extensive partnerships, as well as work in further junction with CGIAR.

FAO's role in support to crop production needs to be further articulated in its global goals, particularly within FAO's Strategic Objective 2 (SO2): 'Make agriculture, forestry and fisheries more productive and sustainable'. This is essential for FAO's operational coherence, and can help provide guidance to rebuild required technical capacities and build more productive partnership strategies at national, regional and global levels.

Recommendations

Of the eight recommendations made, the following three were accepted¹²:

- (1) In order to strengthen its ability to serve member countries in improving crop production, FAO needs to develop a clear, medium- to long-term human resources strategy, directly linked to the 'theory of change'. FAO should be more strategic in ensuring disciplinary balance of staff profiles and prioritize the implementation of 'technical networks' in order to build communities of practice and knowledge building within the Organization.
- (2) FAO must be more proactive in its relations and interaction with the CGIAR. Both organizations should better exploit their common objective and complementarities in mobilizing knowledge, technologies and innovation in support of agricultural development.
- (3) Throughout the Organization's process of transition towards widespread adoption of 'full sustainability', as a basic goal in agricultural and rural development, FAO should define key sequential changes and corresponding interventions, these being critical to accompany the transition process. This includes identifying the key entry points (technical, institutional and policy) at different stages of the "transition" and for different types of farmers and farming systems (e.g. subsistence versus market-linked), and forecasting their likely impact, trade-offs and cost and benefits.

¹² Partially accepted and rejected recommendations can be found in the management response to the evaluation.

OED Brief: Evaluation of FAO's contribution in crisis-related transition: linking relief to development

FAO Office of Evaluation

PER 2015

- *All FAO evaluations and management responses are public documents and can be found on: <http://www.fao.org/evaluation/oed/en/>*

Background

According to its basic mandate, FAO is a technical organization focused on supporting sustainable development of the food and agriculture sectors. In carrying out this mandate, it has over time, and out of necessity, developed wide-ranging skills in applying its technical assistance role in all types of contexts, including crisis response. The evaluation looked at FAO's capacity to respond to crisis situations from the very earliest point with emergency interventions that closely link to its development role, and to carry out development work in crisis contexts that is fully sensitive to the crisis risks.

The main purpose of the evaluation was to assess the nature and effectiveness of FAO's role in ensuring an effective link between short- and long-term objectives in the response to emergencies. The report examined FAO's comparative advantage in crisis-related environments, looking into whether FAO has had an impact on the quality and pace of transition, and whether it has helped to link relief and development efforts and to mobilize its funding effectively.

Scope and Methodology

Rather than focusing only on evidence of FAO's past work in crisis situations, the evaluation analysed ongoing changes to reach reasonable conclusions for the future. The evaluation made use of both primary and secondary data and a meta-analysis of past FAO evaluations on themes relevant to FAO's work in transition contexts. The evaluation was conducted in broad consultations with a variety of stakeholders in many countries, both inside and outside of FAO. It reviewed the current literature and debates on this subject, and examined approaches adopted by other UN agencies or international organizations. The evaluation reviewed the period from 2007 to 2014, examining crises ranging from natural disasters to complex emergencies and protracted crises in fragile states.

Findings and Conclusions

The evaluation established that FAO cannot be fully effective in its work assisting populations affected by food insecurity or poverty, nor fully accomplish its mandate and strategic agenda, if it does not enhance its work in transition contexts. Indeed, given its mandate, FAO is inevitably working in a growing number of crisis-related contexts. In these, FAO must go beyond its usual focus on technical solutions for material aspects of vulnerability to confront and help shape difficult socio-political realities. FAO has developed a special subset of its development skills that allow it to put its technical support to work in different critical phases of a crisis, whether it is at the onset or in a protracted crisis. These skills are well developed and recognized under FAO's Strategic Objective 5. Especially under its new 'resilience' mandate, FAO has an important role in the coordination of emergency response and a comparative advantage as key actor in overcoming the humanitarian-development divide.

As co-lead of the global food security cluster, FAO has a strong platform to advocate for the emergency response to include the longer-term vision. However, the evaluation found that a culture change is needed within the Organization in order to ensure the full integration of emergency and development programmes.

The evaluation established that FAO's potential technical contributions to transition contexts were underutilized. Also, it found that FAO tries to stay clear of politically sensitive issues of conflict and peace, when in fact in these situations, no assistance can be neutral. Food security and food production have a huge potential in supporting the return of stability and peace in conflict contexts. The evaluation advocates for a context specific approach as a condition for designing transition work, as current country programming frameworks limit flexible programming and do not cover sufficient context analysis especially when it comes to crisis prone contexts.

Recommendations

The evaluation provides three main recommendations that were accepted by management and widely approved by the Programme Committee.

(1) Transition for Whom?

- ✓ FAO's work in transition ***must respond first and foremost to the needs of the poor, the food insecure and the vulnerable***. FAO must measure and report on its work in crisis contexts in terms of impact on these affected populations. This should include analysis of longer-term impact on livelihoods, of gender and other inequalities.
 - In order to do this, and to be able to respond in a flexible manner to rapidly changing circumstances, FAO should do continual context analysis.
 - Moreover, when designing the country programming frameworks (CPF) in complex crises, fragile states and protracted crisis FAO should include specific provisions for a purpose-designed CPF and highly flexible country planning approach.

(2) FAO's role in transition

- ✓ FAO is a development organization with an exceptional capacity to act in early response to crisis. As such, FAO ***should strongly advocate for recognition of its role*** as a technical agency with a strong comparative advantage in supporting crisis-related transition.
 - FAO must get the message across that to respond most effectively to an emergency, you need an agency like FAO, a development institution fully capable of effective humanitarian response, but with *resilience*-oriented contributions.
 - As co-leader of the global food security cluster, FAO should advocate for greater integration of long-term thinking and planning in the cluster system.
 - FAO management needs to undertake a *culture change* with regard to emergency work. FAO development policy should be determined by crisis planning in crisis-prone countries.
 - Management should find a way to extend the positive effect of the Level-3 protocol in mobilizing development staff to participate in emergency work, to ensure this mobilization also happens in crises that are not 'Level-3.'

(3) FAO's work in conflict contexts

- ✓ In its work in conflict or conflict-prone situations, FAO ***should accord paramount importance to the relationship of food security and agriculture to conflict, and to conflict resolution***. FAO's intervention should always begin with a contextual analysis.
 - This analysis should include a strong political economy dimension and careful conflict analysis. Contextual analysis should be fully integrated with strategy development, targeting, intervention design, planning, implementation and monitoring for each transition environment.
 - FAO is not in a position to have all the information and skills needed for the analysis, and will need to work closely with other stakeholders.

OED Brief: Evaluation of FAO's role and work in disaster risk reduction in Asia and in Latin America and the Caribbean

FAO Office of Evaluation

PER 2015

- *All FAO evaluations and management responses are public documents and can be found on: <http://www.fao.org/evaluation/oed/en/>*

Background

An evaluation of FAO's role and work in disaster risk reduction (DRR) was requested by FAO's Programme Committee in October 2011 and was undertaken in 2012. The evaluation was intended to provide FAO management, member countries and interested stakeholders with accountability for the Organization's performance and to provide recommendations based on solid evidence and lessons learned.

Scope and Methodology

The evaluation encompassed the full range of FAO's interventions that support prevention, mitigation and preparedness for disasters in Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). It was carried out through an assessment of 32 projects deemed to be relevant in the two regions, a review of 27 evaluations of projects, programmes and thematic areas relevant to DRR, a review of 17 normative products produced by FAO (guidelines, manuals, technical reports, databases and policy briefs) and a review of other publications – such as technical reports and assessments.

Findings and Conclusions

FAO's disaster risk reduction-related interventions and normative work

Overall the evaluation found that DRR performance can be significantly improved in terms of FAO's operational performance. An analysis of DRR interventions over the evaluation period showed a shift from an almost exclusive focus on emergencies to more inclusive and holistic approaches. Despite this, most interventions lacked a clear approach and realistic programme logic as to how they would reduce risks for target populations. With respect to normative work, FAO has made clear progress in the inclusion of DRR elements in publications and normative products.

Mainstreaming disaster risk reduction

FAO has struggled to mainstream DRR into national policies for a variety of reasons including: i) insufficient institutional capacity in FAO country offices; and ii) limited attention given to the absorptive capacity of government counterparts in FAO's programming. Examples from Peru and Bangladesh show that when FAO has sufficient capacity and the conditions in the partner country are appropriate, FAO can indeed draw on its field experience to engage effectively at the policy level.

FAO's institutional capacity

The evaluation found that due to insufficient staff and expertise dedicated to DRR, minimal guidance and support could be provided by headquarters and the regional offices to FAO representations. Furthermore, the evaluation found that FAO still needs to break the silo-structure and develop more multidisciplinary programmes that address the multiple causalities and root causes of food insecurity more holistically.

Capacity development

The evaluation found that weak institutions coupled with a focus on individual skill development, rather than on building institutional capacities, threatened the effectiveness and sustainability of interventions. Short project durations, a lack of monitoring capacity development, and insufficient guidance from headquarters, regional, and country offices limited effectiveness of the interventions.

Partnerships and collaboration

FAO has increased its collaboration with other UN agencies over the evaluation period, and has become more active in joint coordination mechanisms and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) processes. This engagement has translated into some joint DRR-related programmes, particularly in Asia, which benefited from a more holistic and multidisciplinary approach. In Asia, where NGOs engaged closely with FAO as partners or sub-contractors, FAO's capacity to link local-level experiences to national policy dialogue was valued.

Gender issues

The evaluation team found that in Asia and the LAC, gender issues were not sufficiently factored into project design and implementation and that project staff commonly misunderstood or misconceived gender sensitive programming. In those country offices which have established a staff gender focal point (e.g. Nicaragua, Bolivia and Ecuador), the effect on awareness amongst employees regarding gender sensitive programming has been immediate.

Animal health – highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI)

The evaluation assessed FAO's role in the response to highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in Asia as an example of the Organization's intervention in the field of animal health. Although support to HPAI lacked overall strategic guidance, the interventions exhibited FAO's ability to respond to an emergency and to develop national capacities that are capable of taking over key functions in terms of prevention and preparedness to respond to emerging animal diseases. The relative success of the HPAI was related to the fact that it was a multi-year engagement with significant funding levels that allowed FAO both to adapt over time to changing needs and to recruit skilled technical staff to sustain operations at varied levels.

Recommendations

Of the six recommendations made, the following four were accepted¹³:

- (1) It is recommended that FAO refocus its approach to DRR by mainstreaming it through the Organization's core development activities as this will ensure a more coherent and technically sound contribution to risk reduction and potentially also climate change adaptation, in line with the Organization's reviewed Strategic Objective 5's focus on resilience.
- (2) It is recommended that FAO develop a multidisciplinary logical framework that clearly identifies causalities between FAO core interventions, food security, DRR, climate change and resilience.

¹³ Partially accepted and rejected recommendations can be found in the management response to the evaluation.

- (3) It is recommended that FAO significantly strengthen its institutional capacity in order to conceptually and technically reinforce DRR at headquarter level and key regional and selected country offices, including a stronger focus on gender sensitive programming.
- (4) The evaluation recommends that FAO broaden its dialogue in the selected countries beyond the ministries of agriculture to include other strategic counterparts in DRR such as ministries of environment, finance and planning.

OED Brief: Joint evaluation of food security cluster coordination in humanitarian action

FAO Office of Evaluation

PER 2015

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- *All FAO evaluations and management responses are public documents and can be found on: <http://www.fao.org/evaluation/oed/en/>*
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Background

In 2010, the global food security cluster (FSC), co-led by FAO and WFP, was created to coordinate food security interventions in emergencies. The coordination is expected to improve the capacity of humanitarian organizations to respond strategically and coherently, and to reduce gaps and duplications, ultimately resulting in improved services to populations affected by crises and emergencies.

Scope and Methodology

An evaluation of the FSC was commissioned by the Offices of Evaluation of FAO and WFP and aimed to establish accountability and support learning. Evidence was collected through 8 country case studies, interviews with 483 key informants and an electronic survey administered to participants involved in food security coordination in 43 countries. The evaluation assessed:

1. the effects of country and local-level coordination on humanitarian organizations and their activities;
2. the effects of the global FSC on coordination at the country and local levels; and
3. the potential effects on affected populations, evidenced by changes in the coverage of humanitarian services and the monitoring of effects on beneficiaries.

Findings and Conclusions

Overall, the evaluation found that food security coordination had a positive effect on participating organizations. The results from surveys and key informant interviews showed that while performance varied among countries, the coordination mechanisms assessed made consistent, positive contributions by facilitating networking and helping.

Coordination teams and partners invested considerable effort in system-wide strategic processes such as consolidated appeals or strategic response plans, resulting in more inclusive and comprehensive processes and documents. However, these processes dominated country coordination agendas for many months, taking time away from crucial agency operational responsibilities, and to the detriment in many cases assessed, of cluster operational support.

Most country-level coordination mechanisms did not sufficiently address members' operational needs - especially for coordinated needs assessments; response analysis and gap filling; using information to inform operations and learn from best practice; and enhancing contingency planning and preparedness.

Inter-agency standing committee (IASC) guidance expects clusters to play a role in preparedness. The FSC in Bangladesh focused almost exclusively on preparedness, and showed promising results. In all the other cases examined, food security coordination mechanisms paid very little attention to preparedness, even failing to clarify which coordination arrangements would be activated under different scenarios.

Beyond reporting, the evaluation did not find any efforts by food security coordination mechanisms to strengthen monitoring and evaluation of effects on affected populations.

Factors influencing the effectiveness of food security coordination

The evaluation identified four main factors that explain these constraints: i) time-intensive, system-wide processes and demands, leading to neglect of the operational objectives of coordination; ii) limited inclusion and participation of governments, national and local organizations, and non-traditional humanitarian actors; iii) variable commitment and capacity of lead agencies, alongside inconsistent donor commitment and support to food security coordination; and iv) insufficient clarity on roles, responsibilities and boundaries in the coordination system.

Cost benefit analysis

While a quantitative cost-benefit analysis of food security coordination is not possible, proxy indicators suggest that investments in food security coordination have been worthwhile overall: i) the direct costs of coordination were only a small fraction of the overall food security budget; ii) in the two cases with alternative, internationally led coordination arrangements (Lebanon and Turkey/northern Syrian Arab Republic) humanitarian organizations soon called for cluster-like systems with dedicated coordination capacity and more clearly defined roles, responsibilities and processes; and iii) a clear majority of survey respondents perceived food security coordination as a worthwhile investment.

Recommendations

Of the seven recommendations made, the following six were accepted¹⁴.

- (1) Enhance mentoring for and capacities of coordination teams in focusing on operationally relevant activities.
- (2) Enhance the global support team's (GST) capacity and improve the preparation of deployed teams to strengthen coordination capacity.
- (3) Enhance nationally led coordination mechanisms and/or increase the involvement of government actors in food security coordination mechanisms to enhance national ownership and sustainability.
- (4) Engage national and local civil society organizations and non-traditional humanitarian actors more closely in food security coordination.
- (5) Take action to ensure more consistent commitment and capacity of lead agencies in supporting food security coordination, and advocate for enhanced donor commitment to food security coordination.
- (6) Work with the IASC, OCHA and other clusters to clarify roles and responsibilities in the coordination architecture, and promote more efficient coordination arrangements.

¹⁴ Partially accepted and rejected recommendations can be found in the management response to the evaluation.

OED Brief : Evaluation of FAO's Regional and Subregional Offices for Africa

FAO Office of Evaluation

PER 2015

- *All FAO evaluations and management responses are public documents and can be found on: <http://www.fao.org/evaluation/oed/en/>*

Background

In October 2011, the Programme Committee recommended that evaluations of regional and subregional offices should take place in all regions¹⁵, over the following two years. The evaluations aimed to provide FAO management and Membership with an independent evaluative assessment of:

- i. the progress made by the Organization in implementing corporate decisions to decentralize its functions and roles to the region; and
- ii. the results of FAO's decentralization policies and procedures on corporate delivery to its Members in the region.

Scope and Methodology

The scope of the evaluation comprised: the Regional Office for Africa (RAF) and Subregional Offices (SROs) for Central, Eastern, Southern and West Africa (SFC, SFE, SFS and SFW), as well as the subregional emergency offices (SREOs) located in Kenya, Senegal and South Africa. In order to adequately understand the work and performance of the entire decentralized office structure, a number of country offices (COs) were also included. The evaluation analyzed the policies, actions, reforms and transformational changes that significantly affected the roles and responsibilities of the different levels of FAO's decentralized network, from the regional to the country level, as well as the relationships among these. The evaluation assessed the decentralization process over the period 2005-2012, with particular focus on the changes since 2010.

A range of quantitative and qualitative tools were used, drawing where possible on those used by the previous and ongoing evaluations of decentralized offices so as to facilitate comparability between the regions. These included: country visits; semi-structured interviews with FAO senior management, staff, members' representatives and partners; desk review of all Country Programming Frameworks (CPF), and of corporate data on human resources, financial delivery and missions to countries; benchmarking of coverage with other UN agencies; and questionnaires to the members and FAO employees. In total, the evaluation gathered insight from more than 500 interviewees among FAO personnel and partners in Africa.

Findings and Conclusions

The evaluation found encouraging progress in two areas: priority setting and strategic planning and partnership development. In some cases, COs have seen encouraging results following the integration of emergency response into development programmes. Success in other areas of FAO's work in the region had not been as clear, particularly in programme design and implementation, technical support to the

¹⁵ Except for FAO's Regional Office in the Near East which had already been carried out earlier in 2011.

countries from the regional and subregional offices, gender equality mainstreaming and resource mobilization. Efforts should focus on strengthening the capacity within each type of decentralized office, including on administration and financial management, and clarifying the links between the different structural levels. Furthermore, a greater focus was considered to be necessary, on the work carried out by the regional and subregional offices, and a change in organizational culture that puts country level support first. Last but not least, decentralized offices need strong management and leadership to create productive work environments.

Recommendations

Recognizing that needs and resource potential vary at the country level, the evaluation identified two contexts for strengthening COs within existing budgetary resources: i) countries with substantial need for rehabilitation and development, where voluntary contributions are a possible source of support for development programmes; and ii) countries where substantial voluntary contributions are not likely, but where policy support, adaptation of normative standards, and strategic technical interventions are needed. With respect to these two strategic models, the following recommendations have been formulated. Of the 15 recommendations made, the following 11 were accepted¹⁶.

- (1) Each CO should undertake an internal review to establish which of the two strategies is most appropriate for their specific context, and develop an immediate action plan to strengthen FAO impact.
- (2) In support of the approach proposed by each CO, and taking into consideration capacity assessment undertaken in 2011 and 2012 in the Africa region, establish a corporate training programme. Elements of such training should include resource mobilization, project and budget formulation, communication, administration and finance, and results-based monitoring.
- (3) COs should participate in the formulation of and assume direct responsibility for, the country components of subregional, regional, and global programmes using either delegated authority from the budget holder, or the “baby” project modality under a central coordinating unit, in order to consolidate FAO’s activities in the country and create synergies between the often disparate elements;
- (4) 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.
- (5) Increase the size and skills mix of the subregional technical teams.
- (6) Strengthen technical team management arrangements.
- (7) Establish broader technical networks that include all FAO technical expertise in the region and expand their use.
- (8) Review and streamline programme cycle procedures.
- (9) Streamline priority setting and planning processes.
- (10) Provide one-stop-shop guidance online on the most current policies, procedures, responsibilities and authorities related to decentralized offices and field programme operations.
- (11) 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 issues and reduce the chronic vacancies in the region that undermine decentralized offices’ capacities.

¹⁶ Partially accepted and rejected recommendations can be found in the management response to the evaluation.

OED Brief: Evaluation of the Regional and Subregional Offices for Europe and Central Asia

FAO Office of Evaluation

PER 2015

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Background

In October 2011, the Programme Committee recommended that evaluations of regional and subregional offices should take place in all regions¹⁷, over the following two years. The evaluations aimed to provide FAO management and membership with an independent evaluative assessment of:

- i. the progress made by the Organization in implementing corporate decisions to decentralize its functions and roles to the region; and
- ii. the results of FAO's decentralization policies and procedures on corporate delivery to its members in the region.

Scope and Methodology

The scope of the evaluation comprised the Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (REU) and the Subregional Office for Central Asia (SEC). The limited number of country offices in the region led to the decision to include as part of this evaluation, also the evaluation of FAO's collaboration with Armenia, as an in-depth case study of the modality of having a country office with a non-resident FAO representative. The evaluation analysed the policies, actions, reforms and transformational changes that significantly affected the roles and responsibilities of the different levels of FAO's decentralized network, from the regional to the country level, as well as the relationships among these. The evaluation assessed the decentralization process over the period 2004-2012, with particular focus on the changes since 2010.

A range of quantitative and qualitative tools were used, which included: country visits, semi-structured interviews with FAO senior management, staff, members' representatives and partners; the assessment of a sample of projects and normative products; desk review of corporate data on human resources; financial delivery; mission to countries; benchmarking of coverage with other UN agencies; and questionnaires to the members and FAO employees. In total, the evaluation gathered insight from approximately 450 interviewees among FAO personnel and partners in Europe and Central Asia. The evaluation also included an in-depth assessment of the work carried out in the region in the sectors of agricultural policy and animal production and health. Due to the particular governance structure of FAO in the region, the evaluation also assessed this aspect in detail.

Findings and Conclusions

FAO had made efforts to better support the member countries in the Europe and Central Asia region since 2004: i) the establishment of SEC, which increased attention to member countries until then not one of the

¹⁷ Except for FAO's Regional Office in the Near East which had already been carried out earlier in 2011.

priorities by the Organization; ii) the increase in programme of work resources to all decentralized offices in the region; and iii) the use of the Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) to compensate for limited availability of voluntary funds in some countries. Among other reasons, FAO corporate decisions about decentralization had not been designed and thought-through for the specific pattern of presence at country level in Europe and Central Asia. Thus, progress in implementation was by default, partial and hampered by inefficiencies in procedures and mechanisms of delivery. At the same time, there was no evidence of 'enhanced delivery' to the region: FAO's assistance to the member countries in the region appeared, at the time of the evaluation, to have similar strengths and weaknesses before and after the wave of decentralization policies in 2010. In addition, the evaluation found specific weaknesses in the area of gender mainstreaming, at both programmatic level and staffing.

Recommendations

Of the eight recommendations made, the following six were accepted¹⁸.

- (1) REU, in collaboration with the member countries, should finalize the rules of procedure for the FAO Regional Conference for Europe (ERC) to be submitted at its 29th session in 2014. Independently from the contents of the rules of procedure, the following should be implemented: a) summary reports from the regional technical commissions should become a permanent standing item on the ERC agenda; and b) the ERC Secretariat should play a greater role in identifying the priorities for the region and its subregions.
- (2) Advocate for gender equality in the governance institutions for the Europe and Central Asia region: REU, the Subregional Office for Central Asia, and the Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division (ESW) should prepare a proposal on the most cost-effective way forward to ensure that gender and social inclusion perspectives are fully mainstreamed into FAO's work in the region. Progress made in mainstreaming gender and social inclusion in the work of the Organization in the region should become a permanent standing item in the ERC agenda.
- (3) On FAO presence at country level in Europe and Central Asia: a) a non-resident FAO representative should be appointed with multiple-accreditation to Armenia and Georgia; the assistant FAO representatives at country level should be delegated enough authority to manage the whole programme and represent FAO within the UN; b) a non-resident FAO representative be appointed with multiple-accreditation to Albania and the Republic of Moldova; c) the foreseen programme and partnership development posts at country level can be effective if staffed at an appropriate level of seniority; d) the newly created post in REU of partnership development officer should work in close coordination with the liaison office, to support the development of a stronger partnership between REU and the European Union institutions for the Europe and Central Asia region.
- (4) Enhance the quality of technical work and the diffusion of normative products by investing in translation of publications and other normative products into Russian.
- (5) Invest in developing coordination among technical departments and staff in the decentralized offices. Ways to achieve this should include: a) annual meetings should be convened for FAO staff to maintain and strengthen technical links between the officers posted in the decentralized offices and at headquarters; b) establish an information sharing platform in all technical departments; and c) establish a minimum of one-month induction period at headquarters for newly recruited technical officers.
- (6) Undertake a comprehensive analysis of the adequacy of the system of non-staff human resources (NSHR) contractual arrangements in general and as applied in the country offices of the region, analysing conditions and procedures and improving the quality of information and communication. This approach should contribute to an overall review of the national project personnel modality.

¹⁸ Partially accepted and rejected recommendations can be found in the management response to the evaluation.

OED Brief: Evaluation of the Regional and Subregional Offices for Asia and the Pacific

FAO Office of Evaluation

PER 2015

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- *All FAO evaluations and management responses are public documents and can be found on: <http://www.fao.org/evaluation/oed/en/>*
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Background

In October 2011, the Programme Committee recommended that evaluations of regional and subregional offices should take place in all regions¹⁹, over the following two years. The evaluations aimed to provide FAO management and membership with an independent evaluative assessment of:

- i. the progress made by the Organization in implementing corporate decisions to decentralize its functions and roles to the region; and
- ii. the results of FAO's decentralization policies and procedures on corporate delivery to its members in the region.

Scope and Methodology

The scope of the evaluation comprised the Regional office for Asia and the Pacific (RAP) and the Subregional Office for the Pacific Islands (SAP). The evaluation assessed the decentralization process over the period 2004-2012, with particular focus on the changes since 2010. The evaluation analysed the policies, actions, reforms and transformational changes that significantly affected the roles and responsibilities of the different levels of FAO's decentralized network, from the regional to the country level, as well as the relationships among these.

A range of quantitative and qualitative tools were used, which included: country visits, semi-structured interviews with FAO senior management, staff, members' representatives and partners; the assessment of a sample of projects and normative products; desk review of corporate data on human resources; financial delivery; mission to countries; benchmarking of coverage with other UN agencies; and questionnaires to the members and FAO employees. The evaluation also included an in-depth assessment of the work in the region in the sector of animal production and health.

Findings and Conclusions

Country offices have seen increased independence through greater delegation of authority in procurement, recruitment, and priority-setting. The Global Resource Management System (GRMS), under deployment at the time of the evaluation, appeared to be a promising tool that would enable enhanced delegation of authority. Furthermore, the capacity and visibility of FAO at the country level has been strengthened by merging the emergency response and rehabilitation teams into the FAO representations. The evaluation found that FAO has made progress in transferring responsibilities from headquarters to the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (RAP), but disproportionately less at the country level. RAP appears to be playing more a role of central control, and less as a connecting body between country offices and headquarters.

¹⁹ Except for FAO's Regional Office in the Near East which had already been carried earlier in 2011.

Overall, the evaluation found evidence of improved relevance and quality of delivery; evidence of increased effectiveness and impact, however, is yet to be visible. In terms of gender equity, there was a considerable imbalance in the number of women employed and the posts they occupied.

Recommendations

Of the nine recommendations made, the following seven were accepted.

- (1) i) Specific mechanisms should be established for an active and structured participation of the heads of all FAO decentralized offices, including regional, subregional, and country offices, in the identification and development of Strategic Framework results-based hierarchy; and ii) country programming framework (CPF) formulation process should include early on the in-depth consultation between FAO representatives, regional offices multidisciplinary teams, and headquarters technical divisions.
- (2) Information available on the administrative and operational support (AOS) should be harmonized across the different corporate systems; ii) the project servicing cost (PSC) and administrative and operational support (AOS) policies should be better communicated to the country offices and a help-desk to assist in the matter should be established; iii) AOS should be made available to users according to a publicly accessible time-schedule; and iv) a mechanism to ensure that financial and in-kind contributions by decentralized offices to the management and implementation of regional and global projects are equitably reimbursed should be established.
- (3) The two offices should become responsible for: i) supporting and servicing decentralized offices in the region to develop and implement their resource mobilization strategies; ii) developing a resource mobilization community of practice within their areas of influence; iii) supporting decentralized offices in developing communications plan and providing quality assurance during implementation.
- (4) FAO and RAP should: i) develop a more comprehensive and flexible system to draw upon technical expertise within the Organization and the region to complement existing RAP capacity; ii) monitor attentively the performance of lead technical officers (LTOs) under the new project cycle guide, and allow open feedback and discussion among key players on systemic bottlenecks and possible ways forward; and iii) ensure that FAO projects and programmes meet quality standards of design and formulation.
- (5) i) FAO technical officers in headquarters and RAP should always communicate with the concerned country office at the time of initial planning of any initiative involving the country; ii) the identification and formulation of regional programmes, both technical cooperation programmes (TCP) and extra-budgetary funded, should draw on the priorities of the work identified by the technical regional commissions; and iii) FAO representatives should be involved in the RAP-led process of identification and selection of regional technical cooperation programmes and other regional and global projects.
- (6) RAP should take immediate steps to hire a gender expert with strong experience in gender and rural/social development issues in order to support the regional gender focal point network. In consideration of the likely long delays in filling the post, RAP should also secure expertise on a short-term basis.
- (7) i) There is an urgent need for a robust post-deployment plan; ii) Super-users should be placed within the decentralized network where they can best service the operations being carried out; iii) expanded and informed access to reporting functions within GRMS should be granted to all decentralized offices; iv) certain approval hierarchies should be revisited; and v) responsibilities for GRMS should be clarified, to ensure the timely and effective execution of transaction in support of operations.

OED Brief: Evaluation of FAO's Regional and Subregional Offices for Latin America and the Caribbean

FAO Office of Evaluation

PER 2015

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- *All FAO evaluations and management responses are public documents and can be found on: <http://www.fao.org/evaluation/oed/en/>*
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Background

In 2012, OED undertook an evaluation of FAO's decentralized structures in Latin America and the Caribbean. The evaluation incorporated in its assessment the new institutional environment resulting from the implementation of FAO's new Strategic Framework and 2014-2017 Medium-Term Plan. Forward-looking, the evaluation analysed FAO's capacity to establish strategic partnerships to increase its effectiveness and mobilize national, regional, and international resources to ensure a sustained presence in the region.

Scope and Methodology

The objectives of the evaluation were to provide FAO and member countries with an independent assessment of: i) the progress made by the Organization in implementing corporate decisions to decentralize its functions and roles in the region; and ii) the results of FAO's decentralization policies and procedures on corporate delivery to its member countries. The timeframe of the analysis was from 2004-2012, with an inflection on 2010 onwards when the decentralization process was primarily implemented. The evaluation examined governance in the decentralized offices (DOs) and their capacity to tackle strategic and programmatic priorities. A combination of desk-study, semi-structured interviews, country visits, a sample of projects, Country Programming Frameworks, web statistics, and questionnaires was used to conduct the evaluation. As the evaluation took place during a period of restructuring of the duties of the Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation Division (TCE), only technical cooperation projects were examined.

Findings and Conclusions

The evaluation found a clear increase in effectiveness as represented by the increase in the presence and activities of FAO in the region from 2008 to 2012. There was also a substantial rise in the mobilization of extra-budgetary resources. This renewed commitment to voluntary contributions shows that the Organization is providing relevant and efficient solutions to the region's development problems, and is appreciated by member countries.

However, the evaluation found efficiency losses on several fronts. First, the evaluation found that the decentralization policy has not succeeded in bringing decisions and responsibilities down to the country level. Decentralization established roles and responsibilities for the three types of decentralized offices, but the roles are ambiguous and sometimes overlap. Furthermore, the transfer of authority did not include a transfer of technical officers, nor did it involve increased resources. Regional management has not

established a clear and streamlined mechanism to allocate resources from the technical cooperation programme, and there is no correlation between socio-economic criteria (e.g. food insecurity and rural poverty) and fund allocation. In terms of gender equity, there is a considerable imbalance in the number of women employed and the posts they occupy. No efforts were detected to enable the involvement of women by adapting project actions.

Recommendations

Of the eight recommendations made, the following six were accepted²⁰.

- 1) FAO senior management at headquarters and regional office level should consolidate FAO presence in the region. In order to do so, it should adopt new working models to adapt to the financial reality and the Organization's requirement to provide efficient and effective services to member countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- 2) It is recommended that FAO senior management quickly implement an exhaustive process to clarify the scope of decentralization among its staff in the region, including on the roles and responsibilities between the three layers existing in Latin America and the Caribbean (regional, subregional and country) and headquarters.
- 3) FAO senior management at headquarters and regional office levels should strengthen the use of country programming frameworks as the main instrument for establishing working arrangements and priorities in countries.
- 4) FAO senior management at headquarters and regional levels should consolidate the regional sphere as the priority intermediary between country-level and global priority-setting and planning, as well as adopting some efficiency measures as part of their processes.
- 5) Regional management should improve the design and implementation of field project evaluation, as well as implementing mechanisms to ensure improve management of knowledge and normative products generated by decentralized offices.
- 6) FAO should immediately produce an action plan for eliminating existing gender inequality, including goals, targets, timeframes and resources. There should be a substantial increase in the number of women among country representatives, and women should also reach higher salary brackets (given that they have the required skills).

²⁰ Partially accepted and rejected recommendations can be found in the management response to the evaluation.

OED Brief: FAO's effectiveness at country level – A synthesis of the evaluations of FAO's cooperation with four middle-income countries: Armenia, Colombia, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam

FAO Office of Evaluation

PER 2015

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- *All FAO evaluations and management responses are public documents and can be found on: <http://www.fao.org/evaluation/oed/en/>*
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Background

In October 2011, FAO's Programme Committee requested that the Office of Evaluation (OED) conduct evaluations in middle-income countries (MICs) to assess how the Organization was meeting country needs and expectations. Over the period 2012-2014, four country evaluations were carried out by OED, in Armenia, Colombia, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam. This report synthesises findings from the four evaluations. It highlights similarities among FAO's work in the four countries, draws conclusions, and issues one recommendation to FAO senior management to better orient the Organization's future approach.

Scope and Methodology

The synthesis is based on a detailed review of findings about FAO's work exclusively drawn from the four evaluation reports. The countries were selected according to a set of standard parameters including: socio-economic indicators of relevance to food security and agriculture, the size of the FAO field programme in the previous two biennia, in both emergency and development areas of work, and regional balance. The Armenia country evaluation had been carried out in the context of the evaluation of FAO's Regional and Subregional Offices for Europe and Central Asia. Colombia was selected so as to frame the evaluation around the implementation of the country programming framework, which was coming to completion in mid-2014. In addition, the work for the synthesis included an analysis of the size and characteristics of FAO's field programme in member countries classified as MIC during two biennia, 2004-2005 and 2012-2013.

Findings and Conclusions

In 2014, FAO membership included 101 MICs, the largest group of Members in terms of economic development. MICs have achieved significant results in improving the economic and social conditions of their populations and the capacity of their institutions. Governments and institutions in MICs are increasingly skilled, discerning and demanding and are expecting more normative, policy and organizational capacity development support from FAO than in the past. At the same time, field-level projects are still necessary as they contribute to the knowledge generation process, and to institutional visibility and credibility. The two types of support should be considered complementary and used to develop synergies, meeting requests and needs, while proposing innovations and capacity development.

The synthesis showed a number of strengths and weakness in FAO's current delivery to these countries. In terms of strengths, FAO was valued as a partner for the technical capacity it provided and for the quality of

its normative products. Programmes were judged to be relevant, aligned with government priorities, and appreciated by government partners. Projects were generally demand-driven and effective in delivering on the outputs planned. The evaluation also found good relationships were made and maintained with development partners, and the presence of committed and competent FAO national staff.

There were also recurrent weaknesses which relate to programme development, strategic implementation and FAO's business model. In three of the countries, programme development and management suffered from the lack of a high quality Representative, a situation compounded by uneven backstopping from regional offices and headquarters. Also, insufficient delegation to the country offices affected operational efficiency. It should be noted that a significant improvement on administrative matters in Colombia followed the introduction in 2013 of the Global Resource Management System (GRMS).

Four additional weaknesses were identified at the programmatic level. First, policy influence and capacity development at the institutional and organizational level was assessed as limited. Next, country programming frameworks were weak on analysis, strategy, prioritization and, to a large extent, inclusiveness of other partners during the preparation process. Thirdly, the evaluation found that contribution to FAO's global goal of poverty and hunger reduction, or to environmental sustainability, was limited. Finally, the integration of gender equality was universally poor.

The analysis showed that, so far, FAO has not modified its business model to the changed circumstances and expectations of the national governments. Financial resources only covered the core staff of the FAO representation. The large majority of employees were recruited through extra-budgetary resources directly as project personnel, or indirectly through the administrative and operational support (AOS) share of the project support costs. The need for extra-budgetary resources to "be visible" has led to FAO's engagement in too many projects where the field-level operational components prevailed over the technical and policy assistance. In the case of the former, the added value and comparative advantage of FAO is not strong. MICs have their own implementation capacity and would mostly benefit from high-level policy and technical knowledge. Responding to government requests or donor priorities ensures relevance and visibility, but not necessarily strategic impact. However, entering into policy dialogue and advisory services is more demanding and less neutral.

The synthesis proposes two possible solutions. The first is to establish single country offices and a common country strategy for all UN food agencies, building on each respective agency's comparative advantage. An alternative is to appoint non-resident representatives for MICs where a fully-fledged Representation may no longer be necessary. In the case of the latter, it is necessary to ensure regular interaction with and support from the responsible subregional or regional offices. All these issues point to the need for a specific business model that includes the following: profile of FAO representative, delegation of authority, capacity to call upon rapid support from other parts of the Organization, and national resource mobilization strategies that evolve with the changing financial resource environment.

Recommendations

The synthesis issued only one recommendation to FAO senior management on a strategy for the Organization in middle-income countries.

- (1) FAO should develop an overarching strategy for its cooperation with middle-income countries, aimed at improving the delivery of the Organization's core functions and the fulfilment of its mandate. The strategy should: i) provide guidance and reference on the main focus, scope and modalities of corporate support; and ii) define a new business model for its country offices and the corporate network that supports them.

OED Brief: Independent review of the IPA-related governance reform

FAO Office of Evaluation

PER 2015

All FAO evaluations and management responses are public documents and can be found on:
<http://www.fao.org/evaluation/oed/en/>

Background

In 2008, a FAO special conference was held to approve the Immediate Plan of Action for FAO Renewal (IPA) implementing the recommendations of the 2007 Independent External Evaluation (IEE). The Immediate Plan of Action for FAO Renewal includes 274 actions, of which 102 were focused on governance reform. One of the recommended actions requested the Conference to assess progress of the IPA reform in 2015 with an independent review. The Council at its 148th session in December 2013 approved the arrangements for the independent review (IR) and appointed an independent team of two external consultants to be supported by the FAO Office of Evaluation (OED).

Scope and Methodology

The independent review process was highly inclusive and comprised discussions with members in a variety of fora at different stages of the governance process, as well as with Secretariat senior management. The IR team used four criteria to assess the implementation of governance reforms: coverage, efficiency, effectiveness and impact. The report provides a broad overview of FAO's governing bodies: Conference, Council, Programme Committee, Finance Committee, Joint Meeting of Programme and Finance Committees, Committee for Constitutional and Legal Matters, the five regional conferences and the four technical committees²¹. The independent team looked into each governing body's functions and oversight role. It also reviews the cost of the governance mechanisms, the multi-year programmes of work (MYPOW), ministerial meetings, statutory bodies, evaluation, audit and actions related to the Director-General function.

Findings and Conclusions

The independent review observed that progress had been considerable. All the procedural IPA actions were implemented and appreciated by the member countries. Council's ability to provide guidance and oversight has increased and members are broadly satisfied with the role played by the independent chair of the Council. The definitions of governing bodies' responsibilities and workflow are now clearer, meetings are better structured and reports more focused. Accountability of the FAO Secretariat to Members has increased and trust has largely been re-established between Members and the Secretariat and among Members themselves.

The review also observed that the Conference is not fully playing its role as the apex body for international functions and more needs to be done to align the work of the regional conferences, technical committees

²¹ Committee on Agriculture, Committee on Forestry, Committee on Fisheries and Committee on Commodity Problems.

and Conference in a cohesive, effective manner. In this regard, they should conduct a critical review of the global issues and identify, discuss and set policy on a selected theme for each biennium, consistent with FAO's new Strategic Framework. The thematic emphasis would further enable a regionally-sensitive and technically-sound corporate policy.

Furthermore, the review found that results-based management was integral to the IPA but had not yet been fully implemented in part because of the change in the Strategic Framework (SF). Therefore, although the Secretariat is now well-advanced in putting a new results system in place, the governing bodies are invited to play a more active role in ensuring that the information provided for their oversight function is results-based and reflects their needs.

The review also observed that there is scope for Council and its committees to be more proactive in consolidating their positions, and hold the Secretariat accountable. Council should push for the kind of results-based information that will enable it to give effective guidance and oversight to FAO's work.

Lastly, the review observed the new role of regional conferences as governing bodies and noted that they made good progress in carrying out both their oversight and international functions. Technical committees, on the other hand, should further define their oversight and international functions and envisage a clearer role for their bureaux, steering committees and responsibilities of the chairpersons. Both technical committees and regional conferences should have access to more detailed information on FAO's programme results and on available resources.

Recommendations

The independent review team came up with 16 main recommendations and 8 suggested actions for consideration by Members to improve the workings of the governing bodies concerned.

- (1) Governing bodies need to strengthen their contribution to global policy coherence and regulatory frameworks by identifying a biennial theme on which to focus decisions and policy making.
- (2) Information provided by the Secretariat for governing bodies' consideration should be more results-based.
- (3) Several recommendations focus on the role of the Council and how it should improve its oversight function with the help of its committees.
- (4) The technical committees should clarify the potential role and authority of their bureaux and steering committees during the inter-sessional period.
- (5) The regional conferences should set their priorities at organizational outcome level to provide more specific guidance for FAO's work in the coming biennium.
- (6) The Office of Evaluation (OED) should focus its thematic evaluations at the organizational level of the reviewed Strategic Framework.
- (7) The review recommends that the multi-year programme of work format of each governing body be revised in order to optimize their performance.
- (8) Regarding the three IPA actions on which there was no consensus between Members, the independent review team recommended to close down the actions concerning Council's function to approve FAO budget lines, and the desirable qualifications for the Director-General. The third action concerning the size of the Council, should be suspended until the independent chairperson of the Council considers there is sufficient consensus amongst Members.

Annex 2 - OED REFORM AGENDA 2014-2015

Goal

FAO and its partners contribute effectively to the sustainable reduction of poverty and hunger, in alignment with FAO's agreed goals and Strategic Objectives. To this end, OED aims to provide credible, useful and evidence-based evaluations that feed into the policy and practice of FAO and its partners.

Intended Outcomes 2014-2015

OUTCOMES	Measures of success	Sources of data
1. Improved evaluation utility and consistency resulting from enhanced ownership of evaluations by OED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utility of OED evaluations (e.g. focus on strategic issues, changes made by intended users in response) as testified by key stakeholders in interviews by external evaluators/reviewers • Consistency of OED evaluations (e.g. reduced inter-evaluator variability and poorly-evidenced judgments) as assessed by external evaluators/reviewers 	External Evaluation of OED (2015) and/or Peer review of FAO evaluation function (2017-18) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews of key stakeholders and intended users of OED evaluations • Review of selected OED evaluation reports
2. OED evaluations supported by sound evidence on results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OED evaluations presenting credible evidence for findings on contribution of FAO to corporate and country-level results, as assessed by external evaluators/reviewers 	External Evaluation of OED (2015) and/or Peer review of FAO evaluation function (2017-18) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of selected OED evaluation reports
3. Enhanced engagement of key stakeholders, including: a) National government and other partners for country programme and major project evaluations b) FAO senior managers and governing body members for thematic and strategic evaluations	a) National governments and other partners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree of national government engagement in evaluation • The level of participation and engagement of national partners in stakeholder workshops b) Senior managers and governing body members <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The level of acceptance of recommendations • The level of participation and engagement in stakeholder workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality Assurance of the <i>process</i> of evaluations • Meeting records; list of participants • Back-to-Office Reports • Management Responses

Outputs and Related Actions

OUTPUTS	Actions
<p>1. OED staff designs, directs and ensures the use of a majority of thematic and country programme evaluations</p>	<p>A1.1 Clarify roles and responsibilities on evaluations A1.2 Guidance on specific areas identified as needed, such as writing recommendations A1.3 Systematize the recruitment process for consultants A1.4 Staff skills development – particularly evaluation design and report writing A1.5 Pilot and scale up outsourcing options for streamlining project evaluations so as to enable OED staff to take ownership of fewer but strategically selected evaluations A1.6 Establish standardized country programme evaluation methodology and prepare related materials</p>
<p>2. OED staff designs and conducts all its evaluations with results focus</p>	<p>A2.1 Staff skills development – methodologies to deal with poor results-data situation A2.2 Strict application of quality assurance on whether findings are based on evidence A2.3 Systematically inform and advise programme/project managers to collect results information through results monitoring and at the outset of evaluations A2.4 Use available FAO resources outside OED more systematically to support results-based OED evaluation – include relevant topics in the agenda of regular Evaluation Group Meeting and staff skills development plan</p>
<p>3. OED staff involves stakeholders, including national governments for country programme and major project evaluations, appropriately and systematically</p>	<p>A3.1 Proper announcement at the launch of evaluations to stakeholders A3.2 Systematic use of reference groups in designing and validating evaluations A3.3 Systematic use of stakeholder workshops to present findings and preliminary conclusions, and discuss recommendations A3.4 Guidance on protocol in engaging national governments and in informing FAO Representatives to this end A3.5 Establish process guide for country programme evaluations and project evaluations when OED staff takes the lead A3.6 Prepare standard briefing and presentation materials for regional/country offices to be used in missions A3.7 Engagement with networks of evaluation functions in national governments and other relevant networks and contacts in the field</p>

Risks and Mitigation Measures

Risk	Probability	Impact	Mitigation measures
Outcomes to goal: FAO leadership and governance does not give serious support to evaluations and their use	**	***	R.0 Keep producing more credible, useful and evidence-based evaluations for use by management, governance bodies and other key stakeholders R.1 Enhance communication to raise profile and promote use of evaluation R.2 Enhance consultation and dialogue with stakeholders to assure the credibility and usefulness
Outcomes to goal: External credibility compromised by lack of behavioral independence of OED staff	**	***	R.3 Enforce the rule of avoiding conflict of interest (e.g. in hiring of consultants) R.4 Systematically organize feedback and consultation processes to discuss peer review recommendations R.5 External expert review focused on whether: (a) the methodology is appropriate and clearly explained; (b) findings and conclusions are sufficiently based on evidence; and (c) recommendations are based on findings and conclusions, and not too prescriptive
Outputs to outcomes: Demand on OED staff goes beyond their capacity	**	**	R.6 Consultative OED work planning to balance coverage, depth and quality R.7 Foster internal consultations and peer support within OED (both impromptu and at the regular Evaluation Group Meeting) A1.4, 2.1 Staff skills development – topics relevant to support the reform agenda R.9 Outsourcing some project evaluations and, when desirable, components of thematic or country programme evaluations
Outputs to outcomes: Weak results-based management and monitoring of FAO programmes and projects	***	**	A2.1 Staff skills development – methodologies to deal with poor results-data situation R.10 OED “Promoting Results” Strategy – e.g. networking with programme/project M&E functions, supporting OSD for self-assessments, systematic briefing in field missions on the need of results-focus and monitoring

NOTES * low ** medium *** high

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action
AOS	Administrative and operational support
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CO	Country office
CPE	Country programme evaluation
CPF	Country programming framework
DO	Decentralized office
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
ERC	Regional Conference for Europe(FAO)
ESW	Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division (FAO)
FNSARD	Food and nutrition security, agriculture and rural development
FSC	Food security cluster
GRMS	Global resource management system
GST	Global support team
HPAI	Highly pathogenic avian influenza
IAHE	Inter-agency humanitarian evaluations
IASC	Inter-agency standing committee
IEE	Independent External Evaluation (FAO)
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFI	International financing institutions
IPA	Immediate plan of action for FAO renewal
IPPC	International Plant Protection Convention
IR	Independent review
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LTO	Lead technical officer
MIC	Middle-income country
MYPOW	Multi-year programme of work
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN)
OED	Office of Evaluation (FAO)
OSD	Office of Support to Decentralization (FAO)
PSC	Project servicing cost
RAF	Regional Office for Africa (FAO)
RAP	Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAO)
REU	Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (FAO)
SAP	Subregional Office for the Pacific Islands (FAO)
SEC	Subregional Office for Central Asia (FAO)
SF	Strategic Framework (FAO)
SFC	Subregional Office for Central Africa (FAO)
SFE	Subregional Office for Eastern Africa (FAO)
SFS	Subregional Office for Southern Africa (FAO)
SFW	Subregional Office for West Africa (FAO)
SREO	Subregional emergency officer
SRO	Subregional Office
TCE	Emergency and Rehabilitation Division (FAO)
TCI	Investment Centre Division (FAO)

TCP	Technical Cooperation Programme (FAO)
UN	United Nations
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSWAP	UN system-wide action plan
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization



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