



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the United
Nations

Improving the abilities of Regional Organizations to develop, implement and monitor food security training programmes, GCP /GLO/279/GER

Management Response to the Final Evaluation Report

October 2014

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Office of Evaluation (OED)

This report is available in electronic format at: <http://www.fao.org/evaluation>

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1. Overall Response

In general terms, the Project Management Team based in OPCC considers the Final Evaluation report, prepared for the present Trust Fund project, comprehensive and sound. The Team congratulates the evaluators for an in-depth evaluation despite a tight schedule and the broad geographic focus of learning programmes being evaluated.

Three Regional Organisations were involved in the project, in addition to GIZ, and the project had two objectives to: a) support and improve the capacities of the Regional Organizations in designing and developing learning programmes for food security professionals in three regions; and b) to develop the capacities of mid to senior-level national staff from the regions working on food security through the learning programmes.

Implementation of the project was undertaken with the Centre Régional AGRHYMET of the Comité Inter-Etats pour la Lutte contre la Sécheresse au Sahel (CILSS), under the auspices of the ECOWAS, which delivered a Learning Programme to support the implementation of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) Pillar III - Framework for African Food Security (FAFS) in the ECOWAS region. The University of Pretoria and COMESA under the auspices of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Planning and Coordinating Agency delivered a learning programme to support the implementation of the CAADP Pillar III - FAFS in COMESA Member States. The ASEAN Food Security Information System (AFSIS) under the auspices of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Secretariat delivered a learning programme to support the professional development of food security professionals working in the ASEAN Integrated Food Security (AIFS) Framework.

The overall message that emerges from the final evaluation report is that the project was assessed as highly relevant to the policies of all the major stakeholders involved in its implementation, as well as relevant to the implementation of two regional food security frameworks: CAADP's Pillar III and the ASEAN Integrated Food Security Framework. The management team agrees with the high level assessment which also notes the flexibility to modify its original design to adapt to specific frameworks and issues for each region, as well as to better adapt the learning programmes during the second year of delivery further increasing its relevance. The delivery mode of "blended learning" was noted as having several advantages over conventional training, and the management team strongly concurs with this conclusion.

In addition, the evaluation noted that the project, as required, was able to set up alliances with the partners and their funding institutions to leverage financial and human resources to implement the planned activities as a true partnership. However, the management team would like to note that these partnerships take time to develop and include considerable dialogue and "trust building" with a wide range of partners. In the case of this project, a one year extension was required to put all aspects of the partnerships in three regions and with their respective funding agencies in place.

The final evaluation noted that the project should have: a) liaised and coordinated better with the FAO country offices, in order to find synergies and be integrated with other country activities; and b) established a follow up plan of activities to ensure continuity of outcomes beyond the project. The management team agrees that the FAO offices should have been

better informed of the activity and in retrospect believes they could have assisted in the selection process for participants.

In addition, the evaluation noted that an in-depth capacity needs assessment, analyzing institutional, organizational, technical and human resources issues should have been conducted and that a consistent monitoring and evaluation system should have been set up to assess the capacities developed at the Regional Organizational level. This is acknowledged by the management team, who agrees that these would have been beneficial to both FAO and the regional partners. However, both budget and time constraints limited the activities to learning needs assessments which were focused on the regional food security frameworks being addressed. As divergence occurred in the design and delivery of the learning programmes in the three regions, a consistent monitoring system would have been beneficial but could have suffered from the discrepancies in the programmes delivered.

The FAO Project Management Team is aware that the project should have included gender equality as a selection criterion, monitored and reported outputs on a gender-disaggregated basis. This could have helped ensure a more suitable gender ratio in the case of CILSS\ECOWAS participants. As to mainstreaming gender and the Right to Food, the management team agrees but notes that the targeted and specifically designed learning programmes were based on the learning needs assessments, were already dense in terms of the subjects covered and the concepts on gender and Right to Food were not prioritized. However these two topics were broached in the face-2-face elements but not in depth.

The FAO Project Management Team recognizes that in some cases the selected participants were not the most suited ones, as they did not respond to the eligibility criteria. However, this is the compromise of adopting a collaborative approach in the implementation of a learning programme, where the regional partners are delegated the responsibility to select the most appropriate actors involved in the: 1) CAADP process, for the COMESA and ECOWAS regions and 2) AFSIS framework in ASEAN. Therefore, although specific selection criteria were defined in collaboration with the regional partners, participants were directly nominated by national focal points in some cases.

The management team is pleased that report notes the involvement of multiple partners and the high levels of collaboration required to deliver the project. In addition, the report noted that the project was able to capitalize on the existing e-learning resources for integration in the learning programmes, and to obtain additional financial resources from the Government of Japan (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries), World Bank (CAADP multi-disciplinary trust fund - MTDF), the Agence Française pour le Développement (AFD), EU-FAO *“Improved Global Governance for Hunger Reduction Programme”*.

Other important considerations from the management team’s view is that the project was able to: 1) tailor and specifically design the learning programmes to respond to the different needs of the three regions, in accordance with their food security priorities and frameworks; 2) deal with professionals with different skill sets and computer literacy levels; 3) deliver learning programmes despite the technical constraints, electricity and connectivity issues, 4) develop learning programmes in English and French; 5) negotiate with CILSS\ECOWAS and COMESA an exchange to support the hosting of each other’s participants to ensure adequate language coverage of the learning programmes and maximize learning efficiency allowing participant to follow the learning programme in the language they master; and 6)

continuously improve the content of the online and face-to-face components in the three regions, based on the lessons learnt, and participants feedback and suggested changes.

The management team most appreciates the lessons learned section of the report as it does reflect some of the things that worked for FAO in terms of project implementation and in working with partners. It appreciates that these have been highlighted.

The management team appreciates the recommendations and has already begun implementing several in new and ongoing projects. The advice, time and dedication of the evaluation team are much appreciated.

2. Response by Recommendation

Management response to the final evaluation of the project GCP /GLO/279/GER					October 2014
Evaluation Recommendation	Management response Accepted, partially accepted or rejected and comment on the Recommendation	Management plan			
		Action to be taken	Responsible unit	Timeframe	Further funding required (Y or N)
<p>Recommendation 1: To FAO Project Management Team on improving project monitoring.</p> <p>The evaluation team recommends the setting up of a harmonized monitoring system which captures in a systematic manner the Project's inputs, outputs and outcomes.</p>	<p>Accepted, the project Management Team considers the recommendation relevant.</p> <p>As a collaborative approach was used and a joint implementation of the project was carried out, the project management team relied partly on the monitoring system and existing procedures of the three regional organizations and this resulted in a non-harmonized monitoring system.</p> <p>However, for the online components the same evaluation questionnaires were administered in the three regions at the end on the learning event and this has enabled cross regional comparisons.</p>	<p>For future projects, the project Management Team will as recommended:</p> <p>1) establish a baseline at the beginning of project (to assess achievements at the outcome level);</p> <p>2) compile a list of the project and external financial and human resources which are used as inputs for the project implementation;</p> <p>3) adopt a standardized monitoring system to capture the outputs in order to enable cross regional comparisons; and</p> <p>4) capture more information with regards the levels of learning achieved during online, face-to-face and mentoring activities in a systematic way by harmonizing evaluation questionnaires and facilitators/mentors reports on the skills acquired.</p>	OPCC	NA	N

<p>Recommendation 2: To FAO Project Management Team to support Regional Organizations on developing their capacities.</p> <p>The evaluation recommends the development of the Regional Organizations' capacities to develop, implement and monitor food security training programmes at the institutional, organizational and human resource levels.</p>	<p>Accepted</p> <p>Although the FAO Project Management Team has used a systematic approach in the three regions to support the Regional Organizations in developing their capacities to design, implement and monitor food security learning programmes, a standard uniform monitoring and evaluation system was not set up.</p> <p>In addition, a full institutional capacity needs assessment was not conducted before the project implementation. However a comprehensive learning needs assessment was conducted for the target audience of the learning programmes, with the regional organizations which formed the bases for the programme of study.</p>	<p>The FAO Project Management Team will in the future when possible: 1) formalize and institutionalize the relationship between FAO and the Regional Organizations in order to ensure long-term arrangements and institutional arrangements for future projects; 2) Pay special attention to institutional set-up issues and relations between the political institutions and training/operational institutions; 3) When resources are available, conduct an in-depth capacity needs assessment, looking at institutional, organizational, technical and human resources issues; and 4) Identify monitoring and evaluation indicators to monitor capacity development at the Regional Organization level.</p>	<p>OPCC</p>	<p>NA</p>	<p>Y</p>
<p>Recommendation 3: To FAO Project Management Team on increasing the number of participants in order to improve efficiency.</p> <p>The evaluation recommends an increase in the number of participants.</p>	<p>Rejected</p> <p>The learning programmes used blended learning methodologies, as a means to extend and enhance learning and favor team collaboration. These methodologies, though effective, limit the number of participants in order not to compromise on the quality of the learning experience and the specific individual attention dedicated to each participant both online and in the face-2-face portions. In addition, increasing numbers would greatly impact costs of the two week face-to-face component of the learning programme.</p>	<p>NA</p>	<p>NA</p>	<p>NA</p>	<p>NA</p>

<p>Recommendation 4: To FAO Project Management Team on promoting gender equality and a human-rights based approach.</p> <p>The evaluation recommends improving gender aspects in design, implementation, and monitoring and mainstreaming the Right to Food approach in the Learning Programme.</p>	<p>Accepted</p> <p>The FAO Project Management Team is aware that the project should have included gender equality as a selection criterion, monitored and reported outputs on a gender-disaggregated basis. It also agrees that a unit on gender should have been included; however e-learning materials were not available at the time. A small component on gender was added to the face-2-face components. As to the Right to Food, though proposed during the learning needs assessments, this subject was not noted as a priority for the learning programmes. Again a small component related to the Right to Food was included in the face-2-face components.</p>	<p>The FAO Project Management Team will include gender equality as a selection criteria, monitor and report outputs on a gender-disaggregated basis and mainstream both gender and the Right to Food approach when appropriate in future Learning Programmes</p>	<p>OPCC</p>	<p>NA</p>	<p>Y</p>
<p>Recommendation 5: To FAO Project Management Team on improving the selection process of participants.</p> <p>The evaluation recommends the improvement of the selection process in order to increase effectiveness and to ensure that the appropriate participants who respond to the eligibility criteria are selected.</p>	<p>Accepted</p> <p>The FAO Project Management Team agrees with the observation that in some cases the selected participants were not the most suited ones, as they did not respond fully to the eligibility criteria. However, this is the compromise of adopting a collaborative approach in the implementation of a learning programme, where the regional partners are delegated the responsibility to select the actors involved in the: 1) CAADP process, for the COMESA and ECOWAS regions and 2) AFSIS framework in ASEAN. Therefore although specific selection criteria were defined, in some cases, participants were directly nominated by the national focal point as is often the norm.</p>	<p>The FAO Project Management Team in the future will: 1) refine eligibility/selection criteria in order to ensure better gender representation and appropriate selection of participants (e.g. to be country nationals involved in the food security frameworks); and 2) ensure a larger pool of eligible participants from which to select.</p> <p>NOTE: All participants to future learning programmes on Voluntary Guidelines on the governance of tenure under Project GCP/GLO/501/GER are being vetted by FAORs and are selected from a broad range of stakeholders including government, non-state actors and civil society.</p>	<p>OPCC</p>	<p>NA</p>	<p>N</p>

<p>Recommendation 6: To FAO Project Management Team on greater integration with FAO Representations.</p> <p>The evaluation recommends greater integration and information-sharing of the capacity development activities with the FAO Representation.</p>	<p>Accepted</p> <p>The FAO Project Management Team could have been more systematic in providing information with regards to participants of the learning programmes to the FAO Representations. Better coordination and integration of the activities with relevant actions being spearheaded by the FAO offices could have improved the leveraging of the learning programmes.</p>	<p>The FAO Project Management Team will inform the FAO Country Offices of future learning programmes being conducted and at a minimum provide them with the list of participants who attended.</p> <p>See note above.</p>	<p>OPCC</p>	<p>NA</p>	<p>N</p>
<p>Recommendation 7: To FAO Senior Management and Regional Organizations on follow up to the Learning Programme.</p> <p>The evaluation recommends that FAO and Regional Organizations undertake follow up steps to maintain the momentum created by the Learning Programme.</p>	<p>Accepted</p> <p>Actions taken.</p>	<p>The FAO Project Management Team has undertaken the following:</p> <p>1) Ensured with the regional organizations funding and organization follow-up learning programmes on Communication and Knowledge Sharing, Social Media, and Nutrition. These are being deployed during 2014-15 with the same regional organizations.</p> <p>2) Provided training to staff on instructional design and the management of online platforms for staff of the three organizations. CILSS\ECOWAS and AFSIS\ASEAN have delivered the online portions of the learning programmes noted in (1) above on their own online platforms.</p> <p>3) €950 000 secured to continue delivery of learning programmes via regional organizations for above activities.</p>	<p>OPCC</p>	<p>Already implemented or under implementation</p>	<p>Y</p>