

Review of Decentralized Offices Staffing, Location and Coverage

1. This note reports on ongoing work related to decentralization, including on country coverage, and staffing and skills mix in Decentralized Offices (DOs). In line with the request by Members at the joint meeting of CoC-IEE Working Groups I, II and III on 4 June 2009, information is also provided on actions impacting decentralization across the different projects of the Immediate Plan of Action for FAO Renewal (IPA).

A. Review of FAO Country Coverage

2. At the 4 June 2009 meeting, Members discussed the ongoing work on the criteria for country coverage (IPA action item 3.84). They requested that data be provided on the number of countries meeting three or four out of the five criteria on which data has been collected and analysed (Chair's Aide-Mémoire, paragraph 3, bullet 4).

Table 1: Countries meeting between one and five criteria

Number of countries meeting:	FAORs (73)	OTOs (9)	Other Types of Coverage (63)	All (145)
At least one Criterion	70	5	44	119
At least two Criteria	54	2	6	62
At least three Criteria	31	1	0	32
At least four Criteria	15	0	0	15
All five Criteria	5	0	0	5

3. It was also agreed that further discussions should be pursued in Regional Groups. In order to facilitate these discussions, a full data set of countries meeting each criterion is being provided to the Chairs of the Regional Groups.

B. The Structure and Staffing of Decentralized Offices

4. The sections below provide an overview of the DOs network, including structure and staffing.

An overall Vision of the FAO Decentralized Office Network

5. The Independent External Evaluation of FAO (IEE) and the IPA both confirm the need for FAO to have a strong field presence. They also make recommendations about the overall objectives and goals of the network. The two key recommendations of the IEE in this regard are: *“The principal mission of FAO is to ensure the availability of, and the means to profit from, relevant and necessary global knowledge on food and agriculture”* (paragraph 1034), and the need *“to reposition the institution and provide it with an effective link to countries and regions”* (paragraph 1037). The IPA in operationalizing the IEE

recommendations states that FAO's DO network should "*provide service flexibly to Members and create an effective flow of information as a knowledge organization*" (paragraph 44).

6. The decentralization efforts of FAO over the last several years have focused on:
 - timely, efficient delivery of services relevant to Member priorities at country, subregional and regional level;
 - two-way knowledge exchange between Members and different parts of the Organization; and
 - country ownership, development results and UN Coherence.

7. Critical elements to achieve this are i) a network of field offices that is aligned with the needs and priorities of the countries, subregions and regions that they serve; that responds in a planned and strategic manner to decentralized priorities; and that operates as part of UN country and (sub) regional teams with particular emphasis on collaboration between Rome-based Agencies; ii) a balance of responsibilities between various parts of the Organization following principles of efficiency, accountability and subsidiarity; and iii) robust coordination and performance measurement mechanisms to ensure that different parts of the network function as one and that corporate quality and performance standards are maintained. This includes a mix of top-down and bottom-up planning, a unified results-based management system, funding mechanisms that allow timely responses, training, a performance evaluation system, rotation policies and ICT connectivity.

FAO's Capacities at country, (sub)regional and global levels

8. FAO helps build local capacities for food security and agricultural development and facilitates the production and exchange of technical knowledge and skills, information and best practices with and between its Members in the food and agriculture sectors. This task requires it to be active at several levels to effectively perform different aspects of its work. Moreover, the respective levels need to work together in a complementary and synergetic way.

- **Country Level.** The direct impact of FAO's activities is felt most at country level where FAO works with the Government and donors, in partnership with other development actors, both in and outside the UN system. Only if FAO has a country presence, can it assist Governments and other stakeholders to build national capacities for food security and agriculture and rural development including policy and strategy formulation, institutional reform, public investment, technology generation and dissemination as well as emergency response and preparedness. In addition, country offices help apply globally agreed norms and standards at national level and assist individual countries with shaping these global norms and standards. This is done through technical programmes and projects, policy advice as well as through advocacy, building consensus and acting as a convener. The coverage, size and staffing of the country offices varies considerably. In countries where FAO has large and long-standing programmes, the office can comprise up to 10-15 Regular Programme staff. Often there will be two sections dealing with programmes and administration, each headed by an Assistant FAO Representative (national professional officer). In contrast, in countries with small programmes, FAO country presence may be limited only to a National Correspondent that works part time with FAO. In terms of overall Regular Programme staff, over 50 percent of FAO's

country-level professionals are located in the Africa Region, followed by Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean (just below 20 percent in each region). In addition to Regular Programme staff, national and international professional staff funded from technical cooperation and emergency projects may increase overall presence to over 100 staff in some countries. Currently FAO has Emergency Coordination Units (ECUs) in over 40 countries and Emergency Centers for Transboundary Animal Diseases (ECTAD) in another seven countries. These units are normally headed by an international professional staff and may comprise a number of national as well as international experts. Although these emergency units often report for operational, technical and budgetary purposes to Headquarters, relations with Government and management support remains with the FAO Representative.

- **Subregional Level.** Subregional cooperation is increasingly attaining importance, both in promoting synergies in addressing common issues as well as in promoting trade, investment and policy harmonization. FAO's Subregional Offices (SROs) are currently made up of a core multidisciplinary team (MDT) of six experts and an outposted Investment Officer. In addition, each SRO has staff dealing with the IT and administrative needs of the office, as well as for monitoring of the field programme. FAO Representatives in the countries of the subregion serve as members of the MDT for part of their time. The MDT serves two functions:
 - The pool of experts in the MDTs serves as a first "port of call" for provision of technical support to the country offices in the subregion. This support is provided directly in subregions without country offices (Pacific, Europe and Central Asia). In doing this, the MDT can also use the services of the FAO Representatives in the subregion who are expected to provide a proportion of their time to MDT work, and, as necessary, can call upon the Regional Office (RO) or Headquarters for support. In this way the MDTs will increasingly apply agreed corporate technical standards and policies to progressively become the clearing house for technical support covering the most frequently occurring technical needs of the countries.
 - The MDTs also work closely with subregional economic integration organizations on subregional programmes/projects. The Assistant Directors-General/Regional Representatives (ADGs/RRs) or Subregional Coordinators, depending on circumstances, are the primary point of contact with the Regional Directors Teams of the UN system with regard to quality assurance of the work of the UN Country Teams, including the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

The FAO subregional network is well established in Africa, Europe and Central Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean where there are a total of nine SROs – three of which are co-located with the RO in Accra, Budapest and Santiago. These offices have been functioning well to develop work programmes and synergies. Planning and team-building meetings, as well as formal training efforts have helped promote this process. Similar efforts are underway in the Near East and North Africa where the MDT and SRO have been established more recently. FAO's regular subregional presence is complemented by six temporary (sub)regional emergency teams (three of which are in Africa, one in Asia and two in Latin America) established and located

according to the relative importance of the emergency portfolio in the (sub) region, and four ECTAD Regional Managers (three of which are in Africa and one in Asia). The (sub)regional emergency teams are working in close consultation with the SROs and are regularly included in all planning and strategy meetings.

- **Regional Level.** FAO's ROs are the main management and planning unit for the field network. Over the course of 2010 their role will be considerably strengthened. They will take overall management, planning and budgetary functions related to the technical staff located in the Region as well as management of TCP resources. A number of functions currently carried out by the Office of Coordination and Decentralization (OCD) will also be transferred including management of the administrative aspects of the FAO Representations network such as managing budgets, travel and leave, audit and performance issues. Regional Offices will also lead the preparation of regional strategies, which will be discussed and eventually endorsed by the Regional Conferences as well as the monitoring of implementation. Finally, they will also provide oversight over the SROs which were conceived as a part of the ROs. All ROs have operations staff and an Administrative/Management Support Unit but the detailed structure varies across regions. In some offices – RAP, RLC and RNE – the technical staff are grouped by areas of specialization, whereas in others there is a single multidisciplinary team. Four ROs (excluding REU) have an Internal Auditor outposted from the Office of the Inspector General at Headquarters. Technical staff from ROs and SROs also participate as needed in emergency-related work.
- **Global Level.** FAO Headquarters is responsible for global policy and planning, and for the production and exchange of information, technical knowledge and best practices of global relevance that will guide the decentralized network. The DOs will in turn provide feedback and practical lessons that will help Headquarters evolve its policies and guidance. Headquarters will also ensure cohesion and coordination between ROs and with the entire decentralized network to ensure that the Organization works as one and there is consistent application by staff at all locations of corporate technical, managerial and administrative standards and policies. Finally, Headquarters will also ensure interaction with the overall governing structures of the Organization.

Regional Staffing Patterns

9. Some 47 percent of all Regular Programme professional staff in DOs (both national and international) is located in country offices (see table 2 below). The remaining is more or less equally divided between ROs and SROs. There is a high proportion (30 percent) of national professional staff in country offices¹. The distribution of staff between country offices, SROs and ROs varies significantly across regions reflecting their respective structures. In Africa the proportion of staff is high in country offices (59 percent) and low in the RO (13 percent) due to the large number of countries and the existence of four SROs. In contrast, the number of staff in country offices in Europe is low (11 percent) due to absence of

¹ For cost-effectiveness reasons, past policy emphasized the replacement of International Professional Programme Officers and highly graded GS staff in FAO Representations with National Professionals.

fully fledged FAO Representations. Among ROs, RAP has the highest proportion of staff (52 percent) reflecting the fact that MDTs have not yet been established. In considering the number of staff in ROs and SROs, it may be worth recalling that the SROs/MDTs are considered an integral part of the ROs.

Table 2. Staffing of Regional, Subregional and Country Offices ^{1/}

International and National Professional Staff*							
Type of office	Regional Office		Subregional Office		Country Office		Total Prof Staff
	Total	Of which nationals	Total	Of which nationals	Total	Of which nationals	
Africa	24	1	53	10	111	75	188
	13%		28%		59%		100%
Asia & the Pacific	40	0	7	0	41	27	88
	45%		8%		47%		100%
Europe & Central Asia	14	2	18	3	4	4	36
	39%		50%		11%		100%
Lat. Am. & the Caribbean	23	1	33	7	40	23	96
	24%		34%		42%		100%
Near East & North Africa	17	0	15	0	18	11	50
	34%		30%		36%		100%
Grand Total	118	4	126	20	214	140	458
	26%		27%		47%		100%

1/ Excludes Liaison Offices and the Subregional Office for the Gulf Cooperation Council States and Yemen (SNG) which is in the process of being established

C. Ongoing and Planned Work for Functioning as One

10. Although the IEE endorsed the overall structure of DOs, it identified a number of weaknesses, including the fragmentation of the work programme; the lack of programmable resources to develop a coherent field programme, especially at country level; and the limited delegation of decision-making authorities. Work is ongoing in all these areas. This work cuts across all the IPA projects, the Root and Branch Review work streams and the ongoing core functions of the Organization such as the preparation of Information and Knowledge Sharing Strategies as well as a Corporate Capacity Development Strategy. A number of areas of ongoing activities were reported to the joint meeting of the Working Groups of the CoC-IEE on 4 June 2009. A preliminary schedule of change initiatives that impact on the speed and quality of the decentralization process is attached in Annex I.

11. Over the rest of 2009 and in the 2010-11 biennium there will be a strong emphasis on improving the coherence, performance and integration of the current DO network and ensuring that the Organization functions as one. In the course of 2010-11, ROs, working as appropriate with the SROs, will progressively take on new responsibilities for: (i) overseeing

the country offices, including the management of resources of the FAO Representations network; (ii) managing the non-emergency TCP Programme in the respective regions; (iii) leading the strategic planning, and programming and budgeting process for the region; (iv) supervising regional technical officers; (v) organizing and servicing the strengthened Regional Conferences; (vi) leading partnerships, particularly with regional organizations; and (vii) supporting country offices on matters dealing with UN reforms.

Decentralization of TCP and OCD Functions

12. In line with the IEE and IPA, TCP and many of the OCD functions are being transferred to the ROs. At the same time, a limited set of policy and overall management functions will be transferred to a new unit - the Office for Support to Decentralization (OSD) - and attached to the Deputy Director-General Operations. The OCD functions to be transferred to ROs are set out in the document submitted to the joint meeting of the Working Groups of the CoC-IEE held on 17 April 2009.

13. Regional Offices have reviewed the proposal for transfer and have emphasized the need for a phased approach, a well defined training programme and strong backup and support during the transition phases. Particular emphasis will be put on ensuring synergy between new and existing RO functions to compensate for the loss of the economies of scale inherent in decentralizing functions. It is recognized that these provisional resource transfers involved in these changes may have to be adjusted as the Organization moves into implementation.

Technical Skills Mix Review

14. All ROs/SROs undertook a review of their technical skills mix, as part of the preparation of the PWB 2010-11. Some changes and amendments have been proposed in technical disciplines to better match the requirements of the concerned (sub)region. Skills mix changes will be implemented incrementally in the course of the biennium 2010-11 as empty posts are filled.

15. All RO/SROs highlighted the need for additional expertise to adequately carry out the programmatic, technical and policy work that is required of them; provide an adequate service to the countries and regional/subregional institutions with which they collaborate; and respond to country and (sub)regional needs. The additional skills required vary by office and often reflect emerging regional priority areas such as trade, marketing and climate change, specialized skills of particular concern to the RO/SRO including Wildlife and Protected Areas, Land Management/Soil Fertility. It is suggested that options for extra-budgetary funding, to reinforce the technical capacity of ROs and SROs be considered by the concerned Regional Conferences during 2010, also in light of the initial experience of the Impact Focus Areas.

Results Based Management

16. Over the next several years, the new results-based management approach will continue to be rolled out across FAO, including at regional and subregional level, for work under all sources of funds. This will include full regional and subregional participation in the workplanning exercise, in early 2010, which details the high-level plans set out in the medium-term and biennial planning processes. It will also entail on-going monitoring by these offices, beginning mid-2010, of the extent to which planned contributions to the pertinent Strategic and Functional Objectives have been delivered, and participation in the Strategy Teams in reporting on the indicators of achievement for Organizational Results specified in the Medium Term Plan. Training will be put in place in early 2010 to support regional and subregional managers and staff in applying results-based practices to their areas of work. Simultaneously, the model and process to be used for integrating country offices into the results-based model will be agreed with the various FAO stakeholders in early 2010. This will permit, in addition to participation of ROs and SROs, a pilot to test the approach for country planning during the preparation of the next Medium Term Plan and Programme of Work and Budget in late 2010 through early 2011. Staff in DOs will be trained on results-based management concepts and a new system of operational planning, performance monitoring and reporting, and benchmarking will be developed and rolled out.

17. The DOs will progressively assume their new role in strategic planning and priority setting at corporate and decentralized level. They will continue the development of National Medium Term Priority Frameworks (NMTPFs) and coordinate the identification of (sub) regional priority areas to assure the relevance of planned results for country and (sub)regional development agendas. They will also take active part in the progressive formulation and introduction of Impact Focus Areas, including implementation of associated resource mobilization strategies.

Human Resources

18. In the latter half of 2009 important HR initiatives will be started or pursued. The draft Rotation / mobility policy will be discussed by the CoC-IEE Working Groups on 16 September 2009. Training in preparation of the decentralization of TCP and the roll-out of the Performance Evaluation and Measurement System will be undertaken. It will also see the start of the revision of the corporate competency framework including functional competencies and job descriptions of FAO Representatives. The Management and Leadership Programme (currently consisting of the Management Development Centre (MDC) for P-5/D-1s and the related coaching programme) will be expanded with a Management and Leadership Curriculum. It will also see the start of development of the FAO Virtual Academy i.e. a network for the delivery, at all locations, of human resources development and learning programmes to FAO staff together with related services (e.g. coaching) through, *inter alia*, the deployment of the Oracle Learning Management System.

Administration

19. **Greater Delegation of Authority for Procurement:** The revised Manual Section 502 - Procurement of Goods, Works and Services should be launched in the fall of 2009 and would provide a greater delegated authority for the decentralized offices and the Regional and Sub regional representations for procurement actions. A comprehensive training on the new

manual and procurement certification is being planned by AFS for late 2009 and into 2010 for all decentralized offices to accompany the release of the new Manual section and to support the increase in the delegation of authority. The training will begin with those offices carrying out the higher volumes of procurement so that the higher delegation can be progressively rolled out and FAORs can confidently assume the higher authority levels. Practical guidelines and a multi lingual web based application will accompany the Procurement manual in 2010 to make the manual section more user friendly. Other important initiatives ongoing include: a review of the procedures regarding Letters of Agreement (LOAs) with a view to streamlining the process and similarly increasing the delegation of authority, and framework agreements through tenders for a decentralized approach to the purchase of vehicles, and possibly fertilizer.

20. **Improved Connectivity and Accounting Systems.** The Wide Area Network connectivity for DOs is planned to be upgraded together with enhanced IT support to DOs. This will permit nearly all DOs to effectively use corporate systems, including Oracle, Data Warehouse, and other Intranet and Web-based applications. It will enable high-quality videoconferencing, thus improving communications with Headquarters and among DOs. Improved connectivity will also facilitate the delivery of learning programmes at all locations through the on-line FAO Virtual Academy. By mid-2012 a new Field Accounting System to support the financial transaction processing, accounting and reporting requirements of DOs will be rolled out. The new system will support IPSAS compliance and bring further benefits in terms of controls, financial data availability and asset stewardship.

Other Areas of Work Related to Decentralization

21. Reform will be further deepened in the latter half of 2009 with the approval by the November 2009 Conference of the amendments to the Basic Texts to bring about the changes in status, functions, reporting lines and work methods of the Regional Conferences. A new Circular on Responsibilities and Relationships will be drafted to reflect the new situation.

22. The new resource mobilization strategy will be pursued through the development of advocacy/communication material and website including for the Impact Focus Areas promotion material. The last quarter of 2009 may also see the internal senior management approvals of the Corporate Capacity Development Strategy and the Corporate Information and Knowledge Management Strategy.

23. Country offices will continue to play a proactive role in the enhanced UN system coherence approaches, including Delivering as One, and FAO will participate in the UN Regional Director Teams that provide support, quality assurance and oversight on programmatic matters for UN Country Teams.

D. CoC-IEE Guidance Sought

24. CoC-IEE views and guidance are sought on how to proceed in regard to:

- The country coverage issues;
- Ongoing and planned activities for Functioning as One.

Annex I. Provisional Schedule of Actions foreseen under IPA that will affect decentralization

Division	IPA Project	Deliverable	Start	End
1. Decentralization of TCP and OCD Functions				
TCO	5	Training DO staff (Sept 2009 - Dec 2009) followed by full decentralization of non-emergency TCP project management as of 1 January 2010	01/09/09	01/01/10
OCD	6	Transfer of OCD responsibilities to ROs	01/01/10	31/12/11
2. Technical Skills Mix Review				
OCD/PBE	6	Skills mix review of ROs and SROs	01/05/09	31/07/09
3. Results-based Management				
PBE	3	Workplanning covering all sources of funds rolled out to RO/SROs	01/01/10	31/03/10
PBE	3	Design of MTP-PWB planning model/process for country offices	01/01/10	31/03/10
PBE	3	RBM Training rolled out to RO/SROs	01/01/10	30/06/10
OCD	6	Benchmarking and performance-based reporting system	01/01/10	31/12/10
PBE	3	Implementation monitoring (RO/SRO). June 2010 for the first mid-term reporting	01/05/10	01/06/10
PBE	3	Pilot country office PWB-MTP planning process	01/07/10	31/03/11
PBE	3	MTP-PWB planning (RO/SRO)	01/10/10	31/12/11
4. Human Resources Management				
AFH	14	Mobility / rotation policy to Sept 2009 CoC-IEE	01/01/09	22/09/09
AFH	14	Revised competency framework including functional competencies of FAO Representatives	01/09/09	31/03/10
OCD	6	Development of competencies and job descriptions for staff of DOs.	01/10/09	31/12/10
AFH	14	PEMS roll-out in ROs, SROs, Liaison and Country offices	01/10/09	01/04/10
AFH	14	Expansion of the Management and Leadership Programme consisting of participation by P-5 / D-1s in the Management Development Center (MDC) and a coaching programme with a Management and Leadership Curriculum that focuses on (i) Building Strategic Partnership and (ii) Strategic Management and Leadership	01/10/09	31/12/11
AFH	14	The FAO Virtual Academy (FVA) i.e. a hosted network for the delivery, at all locations, of human resources development and learning programmes to FAO staff together with related coaching services and face-to-face events through, <i>inter alia</i> , the deployment of the Oracle Learning Management System (late 2009 to 2012)	01/11/09	31/12/12
5. Administration				
AFS	9	Launch of greater delegated authority for procurement to DOs through the revision of Manual Section 502 - Procurement guidelines	01/09/09	30/09/09

KCT	6	Wide Area Network connectivity for DOs including provision of an enhanced IT support. This will permit nearly all DOs to effectively use corporate systems, including Oracle, Data Warehouse, Intranet and Web-based applications and improve communications to and between ROs and SROs through the deployment of high-quality videoconferencing. Planned under IPA item 3.90 subject to IPA funding	01/09/09	31/12/10
KCT	6	Provisional plans to make a number of applications available to DOs, such as Oracle performance management system (2010), Business Intelligence applications (2011)	01/01/10	31/12/11
AFS	9	Launch of greater delegated authority for letters of agreement through revision of MS 507 - Letters of Agreement	01/01/10	31/01/10
AFS	9	Launch of greater delegated authority of DOs for vehicle purchases through new framework agreements (mechanism whereby the DOs can directly purchase vehicles needed without coming to AFSP)	01/01/10	31/01/10
AFS	9	Launch decentralized framework / long-term agreements for seed and fertilizer purchases.	01/01/10	31/01/10
KCT	11a	(i) Improvements to processes, procedures and systems in the DOs to support IPSAS compliance including receipts of goods and services, inventory and assets. (ii) IPSAS Project integrates the FAS Replacement Project. FAS addresses financial transaction processing, accounting and reporting at DOs.	01/10/11	31/2/2012
6. Other Areas of Work Related to Decentralization				
OCD	6	Development of new Circular on Responsibilities and Relationships.	15/06/09	22/09/09
KCC	1	Amendments to the Basic Texts to change status, functions, reporting lines and work methods of the Regional Conferences. Review by July 2009 Council and Adoption by Nov 2009 Conference.	22/07/09	15/11/09
PBE/TCA	4	Develop new resource mobilization-related advocacy/communication material for website and IFA promotion material that provides success stories at country or regional level	01/09/09	31/03/10
KCE		Senior Management approval of draft Corporate Capacity Development Strategy	01/10/09	31/10/09
KCE		Senior Management Approval of draft Corporate Information and Knowledge Management Strategy	01/10/09	31/10/09
PBE/TCA	4	Agree on roles for resource mobilization and resources allocation for field offices (ROs/SROs)	01/01/10	31/03/10
PBE/TCA	4	Review of cost recovery FAO policy and implementation, in particular at country level	01/01/10	31/12/10
ADG/RRs		First round of reformed Regional Conferences	01/01/10	31/12/10
PBE/TCA	4	Definition of the NMTPF role for resource mobilization at country level and related role of Country Office	01/03/10	31/03/10
PBE/TCA	4	Implementation of agreed revised resource mobilization roles by DOs	01/04/10	30/09/10
PBE/TCA	4	Training/support to DOs on new resource mobilization approaches	01/04/10	31/12/10
AUD	12	Enterprise Risk Management. No deliverables foreseen in 2009. Review of external consultant's report by management and Governing Bodies foreseen July - Nov 2010	01/07/10	30/11/10