

Thematic Evaluation Series

Real-time evaluation of FAO's COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme –Phase II

Annex 3. Case studies' good practices and lessons learned

The good practices and lessons learned are derived from those extracted from the case studies (identified in parenthesis).

A. Ensuring the relevance and timeliness of FAO's response: good practices	
<p><u>Good practice 1: The adaptability and responsiveness of FAO personnel to address emerging needs through contingency planning, reallocation of resources and reprogramming of activities proved essential in ensuring a timely and relevant response.</u></p> <p><u>Potential continuation/replication by:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Management</i> 	<p><u>Supporting good practices from the assessments:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Internal capacities and flexible operating procedures allowed the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to creatively repurpose resources and activities, which facilitated timely decision-making to address emerging needs. (Cabo Verde) b) The capacity of project management teams to adjust activities and reallocate resources ensured a timely response in which the needs of beneficiaries were prioritized. (Kenya) c) Contingency planning proved fundamental to manage risks efficiently and prioritize pandemic responses. (Kenya) d) FAO was able to rapidly prioritize households affected by COVID-19 thanks to the preparedness of the country office to reassign activities and resources. (Honduras)
<p><u>Good practice 2: The use of real-time data collection was key to informing timely decision-making.</u></p> <p><u>Potential continuation/replication by:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Management</i> • <i>Technical personnel</i> 	<p><u>Supporting good practices from the assessments:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Real-time monitoring systems, such as the Emergency Agriculture and Food Security Surveillance System (EmA-FSS), provided rapid high-quality data that was used to develop knowledge products and facilitated timely decision-making. (Malawi)
<p><u>Good practice 3: Learning from and leveraging ongoing and/or past experiences and interventions increased the timeliness of the response.</u></p> <p><u>Potential continuation/replication by:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Management</i> • <i>Decentralized Offices personnel</i> • <i>Technical personnel</i> 	<p><u>Supporting good practices from the assessments:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Leveraging interventions and networks (e.g. agricultural cooperatives, savings groups, etc.) from past projects reduced the amount of time needed to design new activities. (Cambodia) b) Learning from past and ongoing interventions helped implement activities within a short time period. (Tajikistan)
A. Ensuring the relevance and timeliness of FAO's response: lessons learned	
<p><u>Lesson learned 1: Adapting existing data systems and tools to the COVID-19 context was critical for planning a timely response.</u></p>	<p><u>Supporting lessons learned from the assessments:</u></p>

<p><u>Potential continuation/replication by:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Management</i> • <i>Technical personnel</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Existing data management tools were essential for setting goals, scheduling activities, mobilizing resources, reaching agreements with local partners, as well as for establishing geographic and demographic targeting. (Honduras) b) The use of existing databases and technologies was critical for identifying recipients quickly and accurately. (Cambodia)
<p>B. <u>Ensuring collaboration: good practices</u></p>	
<p><u>Good practice 4: Engaging partner organizations, local experts and communities in the planning, design and implementation of the response was essential for ensuring appropriate alignment to emerging needs while minimizing the duplication of efforts.</u></p> <p><u>Potential continuation/replication by:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Technical personnel</i> • <i>Decentralized Offices personnel</i> 	<p><u>Supporting good practices from the assessments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Coordination with government ministries, other United Nations (UN) agencies, technical and financial partners was crucial to ensuring an adequate response. (Cabo Verde) b) The involvement of national technicians, local experts and potential beneficiaries in the design of activities ensured adequate alignment with the needs of affected populations. (Cabo Verde) c) Collaboration with partner organizations helped achieve project outputs efficiently. For example, collaborating with the Tajikistan Veterinary Associations (TVAs) enabled the swift mobilization of veterinarians across the country to deliver response actions. (Tajikistan) d) The early engagement of national counterparts was essential for defining strategic objectives, priorities and response actions to address the impact of COVID-19. (Tajikistan) e) Conducting joint rapid assessments with other UN agencies (e.g. United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], World Food Programme [WFP], etc.), governments and civil society organizations facilitated the pooling and leveraging of expertise, resources and networks, resulting in broader geographic coverage and a timely intersectoral assessment and response. (Cambodia) f) Collaboration with government and civil society organizations prevented the duplication of efforts, fostered complementarities, helped reach more people with COVID-19 messages in a short time period, and overall made it easier to face the emerging challenges of the pandemic. (Malawi) g) In a joint effort with partner organizations (WFP, International Fund for Agricultural Development [IFAD] and World Bank), FAO produced comprehensive and informative reports around food security and agriculture. Coordination with these agencies helped reduce fragmentation and repetition of efforts to engage with the government and partners. (Iraq) h) The selection of local implementation partners with the capacity to assume a high level of leadership and responsibility for project implementation improved FAO's emergency preparedness response. (Honduras)
<p><u>Good practice 5: Collaboration with local media, civil society organizations and community actors proved effective in reaching communities and raising awareness about the pandemic.</u></p>	<p><u>Supporting good practices from the assessments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Collaboration with media personalities and celebrities helped promote community food well-being. (Kenya)

<p><u>Potential continuation/replication by:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Technical personnel</i> • <i>Decentralized Offices personnel</i> 	<p>b) Radio stations were useful for reaching farmers with messages about COVID-19 behaviour changes. (Malawi)</p> <p>c) Coordination and collaboration with civil society organizations and community actors in rural villages have enriched some interventions and enabled reaching out to a wider range of beneficiaries. (Egypt)</p>
<p>B. <u>Ensuring collaboration: lessons learned</u></p>	
<p><u>Lesson learned 2: Joint initiatives and the use of government extension workers helped FAO overcome mobility restrictions and ensured a timely collection of data.</u></p> <p><u>Potential continuation/replication by:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Technical personnel</i> • <i>Decentralized Offices personnel</i> 	<p><u>Supporting lessons learned from the assessments:</u></p> <p>a) Collaboration between FAO, WFP and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) on joint situation reports led to timely updates being available during the early stages of the pandemic. (Tajikistan)</p> <p>b) FAO and its partner agencies launched a joint initiative to provide the government, international community and donors with information related to food security and value chains. Assigning a focal point for each agency was essential for timely collaboration. (Iraq)</p> <p>c) The use of government extension workers to collect data proved to be a low cost and effective monitoring approach. (Malawi)</p>
<p>C. <u>Ensuring normative values: good practices</u></p>	
<p><u>Good practice 6: The involvement of gender specialists ensured that gender mainstreaming remained a priority for FAO projects.</u></p> <p><u>Potential continuation/replication by:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Technical personnel</i> • <i>Decentralized Offices personnel</i> 	<p><u>Supporting good practices from the assessments:</u></p> <p>a) Given that the pandemic exacerbated the vulnerabilities of women, the inclusion of a gender specialist and gender-based activities was essential for ensuring gender mainstreaming. (Cabo Verde)</p> <p>b) Recruitment of female community mobilization specialists helped mainstream the “leave no one behind” (LNOB) principle and gender throughout response interventions. (Tajikistan)</p> <p>c) Women were effectively engaged in decision-making, planning and implementation of activities through the proactive steps taken by the country office. (Honduras)</p>
<p>C. <u>Ensuring normative values: lessons learned</u></p>	
<p><u>Lesson learned 3: Leave no one behind principles require proper attention from the design to the implementation of projects. In a context where vulnerabilities increased rapidly at every level, the prioritization of some groups wasn't always well received and sometimes misunderstood. Better community engagement could increase</u></p>	<p><u>Supporting lessons learned from the assessments:</u></p> <p>d) While trying to achieve the leave no one behind principles, it is important to clearly communicate the inclusion criteria of programmes to local communities. In Malawi, certain vulnerable groups (e.g. elderly, people with disabilities, etc.) were prioritized for a programme distributing agricultural inputs. Some members of the community who were not included in the programme misunderstood this as a form of discrimination. (Malawi)</p>

<p><i>understanding of the driving principles for both ongoing projects and future activities.</i></p> <p><u>Potential continuation/replication by:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Technical personnel</i> • <i>Decentralized Offices personnel</i> • <i>Office of Emergencies and Resilience (OER)</i> 	<p>a) The criteria for selecting beneficiaries are a sensitive issue that may exacerbate social, political or economic divisions within communities. Therefore, inclusion criteria must be sufficiently neutral, impartial and representative of the most vulnerable populations. (Cabo Verde)</p>
<p><i>Lesson learned 4: Relying on existing data could be counterproductive if the information is neither accurate nor aligned with FAO principles. Proper validation of existing data is fundamental to guarantee the right implementation of LNOB principles.</i></p> <p><u>Potential continuation/replication by:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Technical personnel</i> • <i>Decentralized Offices personnel</i> • <i>Office of Emergencies and Resilience (OER)</i> 	<p><u>Supporting lessons learned from the assessments:</u></p> <p>A. Lists of vulnerable households maintained by local authorities were found to be inaccurate. Independent visits to each household revealed that not all on the list met FAO's vulnerability criteria. Consequently, each household was cross-checked with FAO's criteria to ensure the most vulnerable households received support. (Tajikistan)</p>
<p>D. <u>Ensuring business continuity: good practices</u></p>	
<p><i>Good practice 7: Early and swift adoption of operational measures and flexible funding arrangements ensured continuity in the implementation of FAO activities.</i></p> <p><u>Potential continuation/replication by:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Management</i> • <i>Decentralized Offices personnel</i> 	<p><u>Supporting good practices from the assessments:</u></p> <p>a) The preventive measures put in place during the pandemic (e.g. teleworking, IT support, hybrid knowledge management systems, etc.) facilitated continuity of programme implementation, management, monitoring and reporting. (Honduras)</p> <p>b) Proper planning and swift adaptation to the pandemic (e.g. shifting to teleworking) minimized the interruption of FAO activities. (Malawi)</p> <p>c) Flexibility around preventive measures allowed FAO to adapt quickly to changing circumstances and return to implementation in the field when COVID-19 cases decreased (Tajikistan).</p> <p>d) The flexibility of financial partners to reprogramme activities enabled FAO to continue its work throughout the pandemic (Cabo Verde).</p>
<p>D. <u>Ensuring business continuity: lessons learned</u></p>	
<p><i>Lesson learned 5: Prioritizing the safety of personnel, implementation partners and</i></p>	<p><u>Supporting lessons learned from the assessments:</u></p> <p>a) Prioritizing the well-being of personnel during emergencies fostered internal cohesion. (Cabo Verde)</p>

<p>beneficiaries is essential for maintaining continuity of FAO activities.</p> <p><u>Potential consideration/ application by:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Management</i> • <i>Decentralized Offices personnel</i> 	<p>b) Early financial support to government frontline extension workers to purchase personal protective equipment (e.g. masks, hand sanitizer, etc.) helped continue extension services at the community level. (Malawi)</p> <p>c) Support provided to government and project partners in the form of guidelines, consultations and data helped prevent disruptions to the food supply chain. (Malawi)</p> <p>d) Prioritizing the safety of beneficiaries increased their participation. (Malawi)</p>
<p>E. <u>Promoting the effectiveness of FAO's response: good practices</u></p>	
<p>Good practice 8: <i>Interventions that focused on generating and diversifying income for vulnerable households were effective at promoting entrepreneurship, strengthening resilience, reducing food insecurity and improving agricultural production.</i></p> <p><u>Potential continuation/replication by:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Technical personnel</i> • <i>Decentralized Offices personnel</i> 	<p><u>Supporting good practices from the assessments:</u></p> <p>a) Income generating activities created new jobs and promoted entrepreneurship among vulnerable communities. (Cabo Verde)</p> <p>b) Interventions that focus on diversifying income sources are effective at strengthening the resilience of beneficiaries to withstand shocks. (Kenya)</p> <p>c) Micro-gardens proved to be a reliable means of reducing food insecurity and generating income for beneficiary households. (Kenya)</p> <p>d) The provision of seeds and other inputs for family gardens improved food security and generated income for beneficiary households. (Honduras)</p> <p>e) The provision of micro-irrigation systems improved agricultural production and led to a surplus in local markets. (Honduras)</p> <p>f) Vulnerable populations benefitted from the promotion of rural entrepreneurship and agricultural investment through community grain banks. (Honduras)</p> <p>g) Replenishment and revolving approaches to potato seed multiplication proved effective in ensuring long-term sustainability, as opposed to a one-time emergency distribution. (Tajikistan)</p>
<p>Good practice 9: <i>Capacity development initiatives successfully transferred knowledge and skills to government partners and beneficiaries, leading to improved farming methods, increased production and greater resilience to climate change.</i></p> <p><u>Potential continuation/replication by:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Technical personnel</i> • <i>Decentralized Offices personnel</i> 	<p><u>Supporting good practices from the assessments:</u></p> <p>a) A comprehensive package of sustainable agricultural practices was an effective way of transferring new skills and knowledge to beneficiaries and increasing their resilience to climate change. (Honduras)</p> <p>b) Nutrition education was improved through agricultural extension services. (Honduras)</p> <p>c) FAO addressed government gaps by supporting the improvement of local policies on food security and nutrition. (Honduras)</p> <p>d) The training and development of community-based coaches through the farmer business school provided farmers with access to extension services that were otherwise unavailable during the pandemic, which led to improved farming methods and increased production. (Kenya)</p>

	<p>e) FAO support to veterinarians, smallholder farmers and livestock owners in the form of specialized knowledge minimized potential supply chain disruptions. (Tajikistan)</p>
<p><u>Good practice 10: Digital monitoring platforms were adapted for the COVID-19 response and proved to be a practical, accurate and cost-effective method that helped prioritize response actions.</u></p> <p><u>Potential continuation/replication by:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Technical personnel</i> • <i>Decentralized Offices personnel</i> 	<p><u>Supporting good practices from the assessments:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Existing digital monitoring and evaluation (M&E) platforms were effectively adapted to address COVID-19 needs. (Malawi) b) Digital monitoring systems are faster, easier to use and more cost-effective than paper-based systems. (Malawi) c) The use of a digital data collection platform with built-in quality controls was key to improving data quality. (Malawi) d) The development of action plans and the provision of real-time accurate information to coordination platforms (e.g. Development Coordination Council, United Nations Country Team [UNCT]) helped development partners prioritize response actions. (Tajikistan)
<p>E. <u>Promoting the effectiveness of FAO's response: lessons learned</u></p>	
<p><u>Lesson learned 6: While FAO is seen as effective at building resilience to crises, there are cases when its operational capacity to address emergencies in some countries could be expanded.</u></p> <p><u>Potential continuation/replication by:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Decentralized Offices personnel</i> • <i>Office of Emergencies and Resilience (OER)</i> 	<p><u>Supporting lessons learned from the assessments:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) FAO's technical assistance is valued by development partners as an effective means of building resilience to crises. However, FAO's operational capacity should be expanded to address emergencies. (Tajikistan) b) The pandemic revealed the importance of the agriculture, aquaculture and fisheries sectors in addressing structural needs of vulnerable people and making progress towards recovery from crises. (Cabo Verde) c) Beneficiaries gained a better understanding of their vulnerability to immediate and long-term environmental risks as a result of the actions implemented under the Programme. (Honduras)
<p><u>Lesson learned 7: Although government extension workers were a cost-effective option for collecting and monitoring data, proper training could improve the quality of the data collected.</u></p> <p><u>Potential continuation/replication by:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Technical personnel</i> 	<p><u>Supporting lessons learned from the assessments:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) The use of government extension workers to collect monitoring data proved to be a low cost, effective approach to developing a digital platform for the agriculture sector. (Malawi) b) The quality of data collection can be further improved through proper training and capacity building of government extension workers. (Malawi)

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