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Evaluation of FAO's Contribution in Crisis-related Transition – Linking Relief to Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In line with the recommendations of the 112th session of the Programme Committee (CL 145/6 para. 24.b) concerning modalities for saving costs, while ensuring adequate access to information contained in Evaluation reports, this document is presented as a comprehensive executive summary translated in FAO languages, while the Evaluation report in its entirety is published on the FAO Evaluation Web site in the original language.

Guidance sought by the Programme Committee

The Programme Committee may wish to provide its views and guidance on the key issues in the Evaluation report, and to the response to the recommendations and proposed follow-up actions by Management.

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Evaluation of FAO's contribution in crisis-related transition – linking relief to development

Final report

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Introduction

1. Resumption of agricultural production and achievement of food and nutrition security – FAO’s quintessential areas of action – are critical aspects of the transition out of crisis situations, whether they derive from violent conflict, natural disasters, socio-economic crisis, food chain emergencies, or other causes, and whether they are of short or protracted duration.

2. According to its basic mandate, FAO is a technical assistance organization focused on supporting sustainable development of the food and agriculture¹ sectors. In carrying out this mandate, it has over time and out of necessity developed wide-ranging skills in **applying its technical assistance role and abilities in all types of contexts, including contexts of crisis response**. FAO’s ability, or lack of it, to respond to crisis situations from the very earliest point with emergency interventions that explicitly and closely link to its development role, and to carry out development work in crisis contexts that is fully sensitive to the crisis risks, is the subject of this evaluation.

3. The main purpose of this evaluation is to assess the nature and effectiveness of its role in *ensuring an effective link between short and long-term objectives in the response to these emergencies*. The objective of the evaluation is to identify strategic recommendations that could improve FAO’s effectiveness in transition contexts. To do this, it assesses:

- whether FAO has been effective in its role supporting transition;
- the impact of its coordination efforts on the quality and pace of transition;
- whether and how, in its early ‘relief’ response to crises, FAO’s development (and now ‘resilience’) mandate has helped to more effectively link relief and development;
- FAO’s ability to mobilise appropriate funding for this ‘relief and development’ role as part of its resilience agenda, overcoming the frequent donor divide between short-term ‘humanitarian’ funding and longer-term funding for development; and
- FAO’s comparative advantages and competitive positioning in crisis-related environments, to identify lessons from experience and spell out its optimal role.

4. The evaluation, reviewing the period roughly from 2007 to 2014, examined crises ranging from natural disasters to complex emergencies and protracted crises in fragile states. Field visits focused mostly on FAO work in fragile states affected by conflict-related crises in the last decade.² It also assessed the response to a major natural disaster, Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines.

5. The team analysed how internal changes affected FAO’s work in this area, either positively or negatively, focusing on reforms leading to the decentralization of emergency operations, new standard operating procedures for large scale emergencies, and the Reviewed FAO Strategic Framework of June 2013.

6. In the complexities of ever-more frequent crisis situations, the contribution from a technical specialized agency like FAO cannot be isolated from the broader socio-political dimensions and multi-faceted nature of these crises. The evaluation seeks to assess the extent

¹ The word “agriculture,” when used in this report, refers to the wide definition of agriculture that is FAO’s mandate, including plant production, animal production, forestry and fisheries.

² Countries visited were Liberia, Mali, Uganda, DRC, West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the Philippines.

to which, in its actions in crisis situations, FAO is able to take into account key elements of this complexity, including risks of violence and insecurity, underlying social tensions, and the humanitarian as well as developmental needs of affected populations.

7. Findings of this evaluation cover a wide range of issues and cut across a number of conceptual debates, agendas, and internal and external reforms. The interaction between these factors is at the centre of the analysis. Annex 1 of this summary presents the main findings for each of the subheadings in the analytical Chapter 4 of the full report. The overall conclusions of the evaluation and the Strategic Recommendations for consideration by Senior Management and the Programme Committee are presented below.

Overall conclusions and strategic recommendations

8. First of all, the evaluation was impressed with the direction FAO is taking, very actively, in the area of transition work, now embedded in the larger “Resilience Agenda” and the rest of the new Strategic Framework. Findings of the investigative phase leave no doubt that FAO has a widely recognised comparative advantage, highly appreciated by its peers and partners, in working in this area of crisis response. It contains within its mandate all the elements for an early response to crises which should effectively link relief, rehabilitation and development. A number of factors have come together to allow FAO to position itself – in food and agriculture – as the ideal ‘transition agency’ in situations of crisis response of all types. This leads to a first ‘recommendation’ (or rather, positive encouragement):

FAO should continue and strengthen development of the conceptual, strategic and institutional direction that the Organization is taking in capitalizing on its comparative advantages and new Resilience Agenda to build stronger links between the relief, rehabilitation and development aspects of its emergency response work.

9. If it is pursuing its corporate vision, global goals and strategic objectives, FAO’s commitment to promote transition **must respond first and foremost to the needs of the poor, the food insecure and the vulnerable**. No doubt the most important overall conclusion of this evaluation is (1) how important and unavoidable it is, if FAO is to accomplish its mandate and strategic goals, for the Organization to work in a growing number of crisis-related contexts, and (2) that this implies that FAO, working on transition in these settings, cannot avoid the need to go beyond its usual focus on the technical solutions for material aspects of vulnerability (assuming them to be politically neutral), to confront and help constructively shape difficult socio-political realities. **It is impossible, without taking on this latter aspect, for FAO to be fully effective in assisting the populations affected by crises**, whose livelihoods are at risk, and whose destiny is ultimately at the core of FAO’s action and its goals.

10. Country programmes reviewed are rich in relevant interventions that can potentially produce benefits to affected populations. However, **impact on livelihoods of individual FAO activities is seldom verified, due to inadequacy of monitoring mechanisms**, always focused on timely delivery of outputs, neglecting outcomes or broader impact on livelihoods. When assessing its own performance FAO must ask: “did we improve the lives of the poor and hungry?” rather than “did we manage to deliver what we planned?”

11. **Context specificity and contextual analysis:** In order to be able to deal with crisis response that works at the local level, **FAO needs to adopt context-specificity as a condition for designing transition work**. This entails focusing on factors such as: access to land; prevailing rural livelihoods; and political and social constraints including power

relationships, social mobility and social exclusion, gender relationships, institutional architecture, and prevailing patterns of income and wealth distribution. In most cases, **current FAO Country Programming Frameworks (CPFs) are not based on an adequate context analysis**, especially one containing the elements related to crises. Inadequacy of the context analysis is found also at the level of individual projects, where vulnerability and conflict analysis and attention to “do-no-harm” approaches are generally absent. The prevailing programming approach adopted by FAO contrasts with the demand for increasing flexibility. **The CPFs reviewed show a limited capacity for flexible programming**, since they cannot be easily adjusted to a continuously changing environment.

12. Although women are among the most vulnerable groups in situations where crises and social upheavals occur, with a few exceptions gender was dealt with by seeking to include women beneficiaries in project activities, rather than designing project interventions to attack the root causes of gender inequalities.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Transition for whom?

- a) In line with the Organization’s Global Goals and Strategic Objectives, FAO’s work in crisis-related transition ***must focus first and foremost to the needs of the poor, the food insecure and the vulnerable***.
- b) This means that **FAO must measure and report on its work in crisis contexts in terms of impact on these affected populations**, including analysis of gender and other inequalities, and in particular the longer-term impact on livelihoods and resilience. Reporting on delivery, operational processes and outputs is not enough.

In order to do this effectively, **FAO needs to do continual context analysis during its work in transition contexts** in order to be able to respond *flexibly* to rapidly changing circumstances.

- c) Together with this contextual analysis, in complex crises, fragile states and protracted crisis/post-crisis contexts, FAO should **further develop the CPF to include specific provisions for a purpose-designed and highly flexible country planning approach for such crisis conditions.** This approach must include appropriate development and resilience programming, combining the four pillars of SO-5. It must foresee the provision of emergency relief interventions when needed, but carefully linked to a longer-term view of development. These CPFs, as well as the suggested project concept notes, should also **serve as a powerful resource mobilization tool**.

13. The reason this evaluation was tasked with examining FAO *in the context of crisis response* is that, as observed and concluded by the evaluation, **FAO has developed over time a special sub-set of its development skills that allow it to put its technical support to work in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, or in the midst of a protracted crisis, or at the outbreak of a food chain crisis**, with emergency interventions that bring to bear its technical capacity in accelerating the emergence from crisis and the resumption of a positive trajectory of development. These skills have been so well developed that this work has become one of FAO’s recognised comparative advantages. Under its Strategic Framework, FAO’s emergency response work now comes mainly under Strategic Objective 5: “*Increase*

the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises.” All Strategic Objectives, however, contribute to the Resilience Agenda.

14. Transition is central to the Resilience Agenda in contexts of crisis-related response – it is an essential means for achieving the *outcome* of “resilience.” And **the in-built ability (and mandate) to link relief to development is one of FAO’s major comparative advantages in crisis contexts.** Transition is as much about development as about emergencies, and about ensuring development support includes the factor of crisis and threats of crisis, so that all the SOs have a role in ensuring effective transition.

15. **Decentralization and integration of emergency work:** Regarding the decentralization, the evaluation observations raised questions on whether, within FAO, maintaining a critical mass of centralized expert resources and supporting constant global exchanges may ensure more dependable and consistent levels of support to countries where transition is relevant. This is particularly important as FAO, though a technical organization, increasingly confronts the need to help shape contentious issues of political economy that are root causes of the poverty and vulnerability which it is seeking to end. The conclusion of the evaluation is that “integration” should be pursued to its logical completion as quickly as possible, but “decentralization” as it relates to the critical mass of capacities needed to affect fundamental changes, may need to be addressed more cautiously, particularly in the short term.

16. Although it is premature to assess the implementation of the reform integrating emergency and development work, the evaluation found FAO’s commitment quite solid. This commitment, however, is not in itself enough to overcome the challenges to this integrated process. **A culture change is still needed** to ensure the principle of integration becomes a part of everything FAO does in crisis or crisis-prone contexts. This means constant awareness among emergency staff of long-term development goals, and also, importantly, that those who focus on development must always plan development in crisis-related contexts as if a crisis were about to hit.

17. The application of the *L3 emergency response protocol* for Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines and in the severe conflict crises of South Sudan and CAR gave a major boost to the application of the new Resilience Agenda. In the Philippines, the very positive initial outcomes with regard to integration and transition confirmed the significance of strong leadership, close interaction with government, and integrated technical support from headquarters, regional and country staff.

18. **The funding challenge:** Funding continues to be a headache in seeking to ensure a smooth link between emergency response and relief, and interventions structured around longer-term issues and objectives, classed as ‘development’ activities. FAO tries to find the right mixture of short- and long-term funding to support the transition process, though the real challenge is to link short- and long-term horizons with a sufficient degree of certainty, reliability and flexibility.

19. FAO has advocated hard for donors and partners to overcome this division, most recently with its own ‘Resilience Agenda’ and close interaction with the resilience agendas of donors and partner agencies. FAO’s message must be clear: to respond effectively to a crisis, you *need* an agency like FAO, a technical assistance and development institution fully capable of **functioning effectively in the humanitarian response arena, but with development-oriented contributions.**

20. **Coordination for transition:** The evaluation confirms the importance of FAO's coordination responsibility in crisis response, recently in the form of co-leadership (with WFP) of the global Food Security Cluster (gFSC). The effectiveness with which FAO exerts this function depends on the quality of the FAO Representative and his/her staff, and of the cluster coordinators, as well as on the support that they receive from other levels of FAO. FSCs represent formidable opportunities for a dialogue with other actors, but they also face challenges in their interaction with national entities, including both governments and sometimes NGOs and CSOs. As a result, they are poor at handing over responsibilities to national authorities when they are withdrawn. FAO's more development-oriented role in the FSC could be a basis for advocating with the IASC for stronger engagement and better handovers.

21. **FAO's technical contribution:** FAO can provide key technical contributions to transition through a great variety of activities, such as assembling and analysing information that is relevant to transition processes, capacity development, provision of normative products, etc. However the evaluation found normative products underused, and capacity development mostly limited to individual training, often of short duration, with a narrow time horizon and thematic coverage.

RECOMMENDATION 2 on FAO's role in Transition:

FAO is a technical agency and a development organization with an exceptional capacity to act in early response to crisis, giving it a distinct and widely recognised and appreciated comparative advantage in supporting crisis-related transition.

- a) FAO needs to **strongly advocate for recognition of this comparative advantage among donors, partners and member countries, also as a key tool to press resource partners to overcome the humanitarian-development divide.**

FAO must get the message across that to respond most effectively to an emergency, you *need* an agency like FAO, a technical assistance and development institution fully capable of functioning effectively in the humanitarian response arena, but with development and resilience-oriented contributions.

This should be done actively both at global level and in countries.

The new Resilience Agenda under Strategic Objective 5 provides an excellent framework for this advocacy.

- b) FAO should capitalise on its role as co-leader of the Global Food Security Cluster to **advocate for much greater integration of long-term (transition and resilience) thinking and planning in the cluster system at inter-agency level, as well as in this specific cluster.**

Internally, in addition to ongoing formal integration of emergency and development work,

- c) **Management needs to effect a culture-change, advocating for 'good transition work,' integrating it across the organization, especially regarding 'two-way LRRD,'** where development policy in crisis or crisis-prone countries or areas is determined by crises and crisis planning (which is not at all the case at present).

This particularly aims to obtain the participation and contribution of all development units in the context of FAO crisis response and transition and resilience work.

Management should find a resource-effective way to extend the positive effect of the L3 response protocol in mobilising development staff to participate in other (non-L3) emergency work.

22. **Revisiting FAO's role in transition in conflict-prone contexts:** Context specificity, conflict sensitivity and "do-no-harm" are important principles of any transitional intervention. These principles have been strongly endorsed by the international community. The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) has recently launched a consultative process to elaborate an **Agenda for Action for Addressing Food Insecurity in Protracted Crisis**, exploring inter alia: (1) linkages between food insecurity and fragility, including through fragility assessments; and (2) the role that food security and nutrition can play in fragile and

conflict-affected states, particularly in the specific context of the Busan New Deal *Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals*.³

23. For an organization like FAO, promoting a good transition approach in a conflict-prone and fragile environment poses the problem of the nature of FAO's contribution. FAO generally sees itself narrowly confined to (ostensibly 'neutral') technical work in its mandated areas, as opposed to other international actors, including some UN agencies,⁴ who have more of a peace-building mandate. In such cases, capacities in conflict resolution, peacebuilding and governance seem to be more relevant than FAO's competencies in agriculture and natural resource management. However, capacities in conflict analysis and management cannot be completely outside of the responsibilities of any agency active in fragile states, if its goal is to help vulnerable populations.

24. The evaluation, however, concludes clearly that FAO is not paying sufficient attention to these and other basic principles for working in such environments, where nonetheless it has the duty to work. Countries that are in post-conflict situations or still in conflict conditions, or characterised as fragile states, represent a growing part of the priority countries for FAO support.⁵ FAO appears to be lacking in the relevant technical qualifications for conflict analysis and conflict-sensitive programming, in spite of its mandate in such key conflict-related areas as tenure of land and other resources. Overall the evaluation felt that there is still a tendency in FAO to consider technical assistance as neutral, non-political and non-conflictual. This, however, is questionable, as in situations of conflict, no intervention can be completely neutral. Who receives it and who does not, and what it changes with respect to use of and control over resources, are some of the ways in which even the most technical of assistance can affect conflict.

25. The evaluation was obliged to reflect upon and discuss a key dimension of this problem encountered in some of these contexts: the relationship between FAO and national governments in conflict-prone situations in which government is party to the conflict. This can be a highly charged issue, though such matters may vary significantly from case to case. As a general rule, compared to most other UN organizations and to development partners generally, FAO has exceptionally close relationships and high levels of trust with national governments, especially with the institutions and authorities in charge of agriculture, rural development and food security. As evidenced in innumerable evaluations, this is a major comparative advantage for FAO, and working exclusively through the national government is a part of its basic constitution.

26. However, in conflict-related situations, there may be times when assisting the poorest, most food insecure or most vulnerable may not be fully compatible with this exclusive channel of communication and action. The Vision, Global Goals and Strategic Objectives of

³ See Community of Practice on Food Insecurity in Protracted Crises, *Mainstreaming Food Security into Peacebuilding Processes – Agenda for Action for Food Insecurity in Protracted Crises*, Online discussion: 27 November – 18 December 2013.

⁴ Seven United Nations agencies and departments (UNEP, UNDP, UNHABITAT, PBSO, DPA, DESA and IOM), coordinated by the UN Framework Team for Preventive Action, have partnered with the European Union on a research and action agenda for Land, Natural Resources and Conflict Prevention to help countries identify, prevent or transform tensions over natural resource as part of conflict prevention and peacebuilding programmes.

⁵ This is clearly recognised by FAO's Strategic Framework, which dedicates one of its five strategic objectives (SO-5) specifically to building resilience in situations of crisis or potential crisis.

FAO's current Strategic Framework are all stated in terms of impact of FAO assistance on the ultimate beneficiaries, who are precisely the poorest, most food insecure and most vulnerable populations. This can create a dilemma for FAO. Of course FAO must first try to use its 'trusted partner' role with government to advocate for action in food and agriculture in favour of all affected populations. FAO has often tackled challenges effectively in this way thanks to the value of its technical contribution and its ties to government.

27. Another important aspect of FAO's role – or potential role – in conflict-prone situations derives from the fact that agriculture is a major source of job creation, income generation and economic activity, in addition to food production. This is true as much in fragile states and conflict situations as elsewhere. The resumption of agricultural activity has an huge potential in helping stabilise and neutralise situations of conflict which cause terrible hardship to affected populations. FAO therefore has the ability, and, this evaluation suggests, *the responsibility*, to make a positive contribution to conflict resolution and peacebuilding through its technical role in support of agriculture and food security. FAO's potential role in conflict prevention – which is all about moving from crisis into development, and therefore about transition – is both enormous and important, but developing this role will require significant commitment, skill development and investment of resources. **This justifies a paradigm shift in the way FAO deals with conflict situations** taking into consideration in all circumstances the impact (hopefully positive) of its interventions on conflict and peace.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

- a) In a paradigm shift, the *relationship of food security and agriculture* (including tenure, employment and income) *to conflict and potential conflict management/resolution* should be a paramount concern in FAO's crisis response work in conflict or conflict-prone situations, and FAO's intervention should begin with a contextual analysis examining that relationship in each case. Interventions and support should be designed keeping in mind the positive impact they could potentially have on conflict reduction through hunger reduction and support to economic activity. To do this well, FAO will need to expand its analytical competence.
- b) Central to this contextual analysis must be strong political economy analysis and conflict analysis. This is key in any crisis context. Tenure of land and other natural resources is a key factor in the potential for conflict.

This contextual analysis should be fully integrated with strategy development, targeting, intervention design, planning, implementation and monitoring for each transition environment.

- c) Such analysis will need to be conducted in partnership. 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.

Annex 1: Findings of the evaluation (extracted from Chapter 4 of the full report)

4.1 *Decentralization and management of major disaster emergencies*

4.1.1 *Decentralization and integration of emergency responsibilities*

Findings:

- The decentralization of emergency operations and their integration into the overall structure of FAO offices at country level **is having a major, if gradual, impact on FAO's way of dealing with development work and emergency operations**, increasing awareness of approaches adopted and issues addressed by FAO officers dealing with both, raising sensitivity of development staff to the problems of working in crisis situations, and that of emergency staff to the consequences of emergency work on longer-term development objectives.
- Integration was perceived by staff as a positive change despite limited resources available at regional and sub-regional level to provide support, compared to the capacity TCE used to have.
- In the majority of countries visited, FAO staff was working as one team, or else efforts were on to make it work, with good examples of mutual learning.
- For resource mobilization, having only one FAO at the country level allows the country office to approach donors with a more coherent unified programme and indicate areas where development funds are needed and others for humanitarian funds (same programme but different funding windows). TCE's role in resource mobilization is useful and support in this area is necessary.
- While the integration is recent, in many countries FAO's emergency programme already contained many elements of the transition approach, linking relief and development.
- All indications are that the integration will allow (it is early to say has allowed) for a more coherent and consistent programme, with advantages for external stakeholders as there is more clarity when they approach FAO. However **the success of integration will need to be measured by its outcomes, and so ultimately its impact on vulnerable populations**, rather than in terms of its success as a management reform. It is too early for the evaluation to make an assessment of the success of integration in these terms.

4.1.2 *Support from regional and subregional units: the experience of Africa*

Findings:

With the decentralization of TCE, country offices lost their main entry point in headquarters for rapid action in crisis situations (with an exception in the case of L3 responses). Before decentralization, TCE was very good at quickly coordinating requests from the field. Regional and Sub-Regional Offices, which should take over this function, still do not have adequate technical or operational capacity to support emergency response.

4.1.3 *Subregional structures for transition: the Resilience Hubs*

Findings:

- From the outside, the role and responsibilities of the three Resilience Hubs in Africa is not clear. Development and resource partners are asking for clarity. In the case of the Nairobi hub, this lack of clarity is affecting their ability to mobilize resources. That hub lacks resources to provide support and surge capacity in the case of large emergencies and even L3 responses.
- The hub in Nairobi is actively working on resilience and is recognized by the other partners as having a leading role in the resilience debate in the subregion. But there is a need to define the mandate of the Resilience Hubs and the reporting structure.
- The Resilience Unit in Accra does not have sufficient capacity to provide the necessary support on resilience to meet the needs of the entire region. A possible solution would be to reinforce the capacity of the Hubs. The hubs should invest in the capacities needed in emergencies which are lacking elsewhere, such as political economy analysis, deep knowledge of the specific contexts of countries with crises, strong regional partnerships, etc. With stronger capacity the Hubs could also become more proactive in providing support in the case of L3 responses.
- It is not an efficient solution – or in line with the decentralization reform – to have budget holder responsibilities in RAF, given that the regional office is not involved in the implementation of the projects.

4.1.4 *Implementation of Level 3 Emergency Response: evidence from the field*

Findings:

- The application of the L3 protocol in the case of FAO's response to the Typhoon Haiyan **has been very successful in ensuring good transition practice**. Two elements of the response contributed to preparing the ground for transition: i) large involvement of staff coming from the “development side” of the Organization in the emergency response; and ii) rapid deployment of strong capacity and expertise since the very start of the emergency phase, which enabled FAO to lead later in the transition debate. **The L3 protocol became a means to promote the application of FAO's new Resilience Agenda**, pursuing an integrated approach to emergency surge and transition. The response was also used as an opportunity to link to a better rehabilitation, to “build back better.”
- Success of FAO's participation in the L3 emergency response is due to: (a) the leadership role taken by FAO after the declaration of the crisis; (b) the presence of FAO national staff in the country office with excellent capacity and deep local knowledge and networks with government departments; (c) surge staff from the Regional Office and headquarters, both development and emergency, selected for their excellent knowledge of the context and experience in the country; (d) the increased visibility of FAO due to the high number of FAO staff deployed on the ground and a good balance between technical and operational capacity.

- From the earliest stages of FAO's response, the Organization was able to mobilize technical competencies that brought longer-term concerns for the livelihoods of the affected population to the table during the international and national response.
- The lack of "dedicated emergency staff" in RAP makes it difficult to place confidence in the office's capacity to respond in a timely and effective way to an emergency.
- FAO's participation in the L3 responses provide an important opportunity for FAO to play a strong advocacy and leadership role in ensuring that integrated and long-term perspectives for durable solutions are given their due importance in L3 contexts.

4.1.5 *Subregional structures for transition: the Resilience Hubs*

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- From the earliest stages of FAO's response, the Organization was able to mobilize technical competencies that brought longer-term concerns for the livelihoods of the affected population to the table during the international and national response.
- The lack of staff dedicated to emergency work in RAP makes it difficult to place confidence in the office's capacity to respond in a timely and effective way to an emergency.
- FAO's participation in the L3 responses provide an important opportunity for FAO to play a strong advocacy and leadership role in ensuring that integrated and long-term perspectives for durable solutions are given their due importance in L3 contexts.

4.2 *Context analysis and country programming*

4.2.1 *Context specificity, situation analysis and CPF*

Findings:

In crisis-prone countries, especially in complex emergencies, one of the basic principles for sound engagement is context-specificity, referring in particular to the crisis context. A thorough problem analysis of the crisis-related environment in which FAO operates is a basic requirement, so that a country-specific resilience agenda can be defined. In most cases, however, current CPFs are not based on an acceptable level of analysis of the *crisis* context (as opposed to the general development context), as their situation analyses often neglect addressing prevailing conflicts and their implications for socio-economic situation in agriculture, food security and its mapping, poverty factors, natural resource management,

vulnerability and the causes of crisis situations, being limited to a rapid review of agriculture and socio-economic evolution of the country.

4.2.2 *CPF and integration between emergency and development*

Findings:

In its implementation, the CPF has shown limited capacity as a flexible programming tool that can respond to the need for adaptation to a continuously changing environment typical in fragile states and in complex emergencies, due to a number of pitfalls: (a) inadequate attention to analysis of the crisis context; (b) insufficient integration between emergency and longer-term operations; (c) low emphasis on monitoring mechanisms and no structured M&E capacity development (e-learning on monitoring is in the pipeline); (d) rigid and lengthy formulation procedures, including for revision/updating processes.⁶

The CPF has not promoted, other than a few exceptional cases or in purely formal terms, integrated processes of interaction between emergency responses and longer-term perspectives, meaning not only emergency work with a development perspective, but also awareness that development is directly and constantly affected by crisis factors and threats of future emergencies. The CPF guidelines prescribe a comprehensive coverage of the CPF, including all emergency activities, but this has not been followed. There is the risk of implementing the Strategic Framework not as an integrated process but adopting a dualistic approach that keeps emergency and development operations still separate. The introduction of a Resilience Agenda within FAO may change these conditions in the future but much work is still required.

Given the current limited capacity at FAO country office level, the expected contribution of the CPF to support the implementation of the Resilience Agenda linked to the “Reviewed Strategic Framework” appears somewhat ambitious, unless significant changes occur. This could, e.g., be through a more proactive role for RO/SROs in the CPF review process, bringing in the relevant technical units as needed.

4.3 *Funding of transition in a changing world*

4.3.1 *The funding trap*

Findings:

- The funding architecture of humanitarian aid and of development assistance continues to maintain a strong demarcation between these two lines of support, making it difficult to

⁶ Annual reports on the implementation of the CPFs are usually expected but seldom produced, though this mechanism has been further formalized only recently in early 2014. In countries visited, the evaluation team could verify the production of an annual report (2013) on the implementation of the CPF results framework only in Uganda.

raise funds for transition activities that link the two with any degree of certainty. There is a clear consensus that much more funding support which bridges relief and transition/recovery is needed.

- It is nonetheless true that some donors in some contexts are beginning to allow more flexibility in time period and thematic areas. The availability of these funding windows is growing and tends to increase options open to FAO (and others) to fund transitional activities.
- Pooled financing mechanisms and Multi-Partner Trust Funds can play a critical role to foster a common vision for transition from relief to recovery, rehabilitation and development, aligning efforts across a wide range of actors and fostering synergies across humanitarian and development assistance. They represent one possible source to significant donor aid for transition, but FAO needs more flexibility to participate fully in these mechanisms.
- Funding for transition may be a challenge for FAO in those cases where emergency funding is rapidly declining and is not compensated by other longer term funding.
- FAO is a participant in global discussions on resilience and a key player in these discussions among UN agencies. However, FAO's efforts in this direction appear inadequate given the critical importance of funding constraints for transition work.

4.3.2 *FAO's ability to raise resources for its transition work*

Findings:

When FAO is able to have an operational presence and demonstrate efficient delivery on the ground in a timely manner during emergency phase of a crisis, it is often better able to raise funds for livelihood recovery and other programming for relatively longer durations. Its ability to apply its technical and normative mandate in crisis contexts, and its proximity to government are distinct advantages in this regard. Dynamic leadership, an integrated programme, good communication strategy and a network of partnerships are critical for fund raising at the country level.

4.4 *Programming individual projects*

4.4.1 *Transition and project design*

Findings:

Suitability of individual projects to local context (context specificity), including consideration of security constraints, is critical for the effectiveness of the transition process.

FAO implements several types of initiatives that are relevant to promote transition from relief to development if integrated in a comprehensive approach. However, there are several weaknesses in the way FAO designs its projects for transition in crisis-related situations, such as (a) weak or absent context analysis, especially of the crisis context, (b) occasional lack of flexibility in solutions suggested, or (c) not enough experimentation with new approaches.

There was not yet a focus on a resilience agenda in the projects reviewed, as the agenda is still too new. Findings from country missions also showed some weaknesses in project design, such as, again, the inadequate analysis of local crisis context and absence of conflict analysis; scarce attention to critical issues related to resource tenure, and land tenure in particular; omission of DRR analysis; and insufficient linkages between emergency and development approaches.

4.4.2 *Approaches in project implementation*

Findings:

- Good design of individual interventions in crisis-related transition *is critical* to allow FAO to integrate an effective response to humanitarian emergencies with the pursuit of recovery and development through concurrent actions.
- Project implementation in crisis-related contexts is challenged by issues of timeliness, which is not only the time to respond to urgent needs (often constrained by a bureaucratic approach of the Organization) but also the timing of providing early phases of long-term support in the short-run, and duration of a ‘state of emergency’ beyond what is necessary. The inadequate level of competencies available in FAO country offices is an obstacle to rapid project implementation, as are slow procurement procedures. Quality of project implementation is linked to quality of FAO’s technical contribution.
- In cases of direct implementation or execution by FAO with its own project staff, implementation can be inefficient (too few, too late) or inadequate (wrong seeds, disease-carrying animals), calling for an intensification of FAO’s normative and policy role, making more use of local implementing partners. However, FAOs normative and coordination role is better accomplished when it is based on lessons learnt through country-level project implementation.
- A renewed and more flexible approach to project design in crisis and post-crisis situations is called for if FAO is going to address some of the flaws mentioned in this report. Project design must be founded on a *thorough analysis of causal relationships that determine crises and conflict, and condition the emergence or aggravation of vulnerability*.

4.5 *Transition for whom? Livelihoods, targeting and gender*

4.5.1 *Livelihoods in the context of transition*

Findings:

- Livelihoods analysis frameworks are useful tools for a context analysis and as a basis for new approaches to transition and resilience. They help to establish baseline information to improve scope for monitoring and evaluation. However, while these tools exist, they are rarely used. Absence of a preliminary context analysis (including lack of identification of

gender and other social inequalities) and good risk mitigation measures have led in some cases to distortions or reduced benefits in the countries reviewed.

- Impact on livelihoods is seldom verified but replaced with information on output delivery. Evidence on impact on livelihoods in traditional emergency interventions (distribution of seeds, tools and other inputs) differed from expectations.
- Although impact of livelihoods has seldom been verified with hard evidence, under SO-5 concern for livelihoods is a dominant theme of resilience and transition in FAO, and the situation appears to be improving.

4.5.2 *Targeting*

Findings:

- FAO has developed powerful and successful tools for comprehensive targeting, such as the IPC, the Resilience Index Measurement and Analysis (RIMA), the Livelihood Assessment Tool-kit, and others. These could provide the basis for vulnerability analysis and the definition of alternative targeting approaches, especially if integrated with comprehensive context analysis. Up to now, however, the results of analyses done with these tools were not fully used or integrated in CPFs reviewed (the exception is West Bank and Gaza Strip) or in project design, and are therefore underused in transition contexts.
- Targeting differs according to the nature of the crisis and the state of recovery/transition phase and available funds to cover prevailing needs. CPFs in countries visited hardly refer to emergency/transition needs (again except for West Bank and Gaza Strip). General rules on targeting cannot thus be derived from those CPFs.
- Occasionally beneficiaries are designated based on a detailed vulnerability analysis, but often project documents define very generic targeting criteria or do not define them at all. There are different approaches to targeting, but also difficulties in introducing thorough targeting processes due to time pressure and other circumstantial difficulties.
- There is inadequate attention to conflict sensitivity in geographical targeting and in community level targeting, where often a blanket approach or traditional community systems are used for different reasons. Instead of being the result of intentional decisions, FAO's interventions sometimes favour regions and individual groups by coincidence, because of donor preferences, or due to specific technical reasons, or security constraints, sometimes unintentionally accentuating disparities between groups or regions.
- In ideal circumstances, the needs assessment for targeting should be undertaken in consultation with the target population, agreeing on distribution of benefits according to vulnerability. In reality this consultation, where present, was far from thorough or effective.

4.5.3 *Gender*

Findings:

- Although some examples were found in countries visited where FAO was making efforts at integrating gender concerns in transition planning and activities, the Organization has not made sufficient progress in mainstreaming a gender focus in its work in crisis-related transition. This is all the more pressing given that FAO has a clear corporate policy on gender equality.
- FAO Policy on Gender Equality, various guidelines and the analytical tool “SEAGA for Emergency and Rehabilitation Programmes” all lay the premise for a more prominent role of gender in designing transitional processes than was found. This requires that planning for “transition” be based on a more exhaustive gender analysis than is currently the case.

4.6 *Coordination issues*

4.6.1 *Basic coordination functions in a crisis-related situation*

Findings:

- As co-leader (with WFP) of the Global Food Security Cluster since 2010, FAO was found to be taking a major role in coordination at country level of emergency response in its areas of mandate. Before the Cluster role and going back as far as 20 years, FAO often took on coordination responsibility for the agriculture and rural sector in crisis response situations. This coordination role at least in some cases (e.g., Philippines) has a major bearing for the sector in linking relief, rehabilitation and development in crisis and post-crisis situations.
- Some aspects of this coordination role were found still to need perfecting, such as: getting the structural features of the forums right; providing stronger leadership; better using FAO’s technical expertise to guide the many actors (especially bilaterals and NGOs) responding in the sector in programme planning, prioritizing communication and advocacy; helping mobilize resources; and facilitating the transition of coordination functions to local authorities.

4.6.2 *Structural features of FAO’s performance in the Food Security Cluster*

Findings:

- Timely setting up of country-level clusters with clear and shared understanding about purpose among key participants has improved. But there is a need to improve timely and adequately resourced coverage and performance in sub-national locations and not only in capitals.
- Working groups/sub-clusters within the FSC are being developed as needed and are found

to be useful. But boundaries and definitions still remain to be clarified –particularly those that relate to ‘livelihoods,’ ‘early recovery,’ etc., driven by competition between agencies and particular contextual histories and not necessarily by logical reasons.

- FSC clusters have difficulties in convening and ensuring effective participation of local NGOs and CSOs and the local private sector. Transaction costs, operational arrangements and language of operation remain obstacles to involving local organizations.
- **Fragmentation** of the FSC and the cluster system in general (clusters tend to work quite separately from one another) led to some problems with coordination.

4.6.3 *Leadership*

Findings:

- Quality of cluster coordinators and support to and recognition by FAO’s country leadership of the key role that coordination plays in the emergency and transition processes is critical and is seen to be improving over time.
- There is still insufficient organization-wide backing of the coordination function at country level by FAO and recognition by FAO technical/program staff that the Organization has a key role to plays as a lead agency at country level.

4.6.4 *Contribution of coordination to programme planning and design*

Findings:

- FAO’s role in cluster coordination in crisis-related situations involves contribution to multi-sector needs assessments.
- FAO is recognized for its technical contribution to strategic response planning in agriculture and livestock, and for looking beyond the relief phase.
- Guidelines for transition planning appear inadequate due to lack of guidance on resilience, DRR, and for inadequate attention to local capacity development. This affects effectiveness of planning the link between short term interventions with long term development.
- As cluster co-lead in examples reviewed, FAO has been less than successful in getting cluster members to focus on cross-cutting issues such as gender mainstreaming, DRR and more recently, ‘accountability to affected populations.’
- FAO has not been effective in disseminating its normative products through clusters, even though that could help clusters think through transition more meaningfully.

4.6.5 Contribution to communications and advocacy

Findings:

- FS Clusters have been good sources of information about needs and response in the sector for participants and resource partners. FAO leverages its good relationship with the government departments to bring views, policies, plans and strategies of the government into the cluster.
- While FAO uses its close relationship to influence governments in some instances (on technical standards, sustainability concerns), some partners were found to believe that it lacks critical distance from government to be able to advocate alternative options.

4.6.6 Contribution to resource mobilization

Findings:

- FAO plays a critical role in shaping the messages of the cluster to donors to raise funds for the medium term to assist with transition.
- Raising funds *for coordination itself* on a regular basis has been a challenge, impacting on the quality of coordination and in delaying the emphasis on transition and development.

4.6.7 Coordination responsibilities in different transition phases

Findings:

- The current FS Clusters are not always aligned with pre-existing local coordination mechanisms and generally lacked plans for the transfer of responsibilities to local actors (mainly government) during the transition phase. This appeared to be a fundamental weakness of the cluster system more generally: it gives a limited role to local actors (who tend to participate only with the objective of obtaining funding), and to national/ local systems. The cluster coordination system is mainly about the international actors, rather than being focused also on building capacity to enable a smooth transition from international coordination to national and local coordination. This is true in spite of the fact that FAO remains a committed partner of national government/stakeholders, and its lead role in coordination mechanisms would give the Organization the ability to better facilitate this transition of coordination responsibilities.

4.7 Normative work, technical knowledge and information systems to support transition

4.7.1 Contribution of normative products to transition

Findings:

- At present no consistent production, communication and dissemination strategy is in place for normative documents relating to transition. Accordingly, many documents which could be of relevance are unknown and not used by country offices. However, those documents which do reach the country offices, are mostly known because they are actually used and much appreciated by staff in these offices.
- The quality of the documents produced is uneven. An important factor limiting uptake, dissemination and adaptation to local contexts seems to be the fact that these documents were mostly produced at headquarters with little consultation with country offices, making them little known or poorly adapted to different local contexts.

4.7.2 Technical qualifications of FAO staff

Findings:

- While technical competencies of FAO's staff employed in countries with crises may be right to fulfil immediate tasks in FAO's projects, the availability of the "right" competencies for transition differs significantly among the countries visited. The technical capacity of FAO decentralized offices is relatively weak and depends on their access to financial resources and technical resources not necessarily immediately available. No country office visited had staff with competencies in conflict analysis or land tenure, for example, and limited skills were found in social analysis, political economy analysis, disaster risk reduction and crisis prevention, which are of the utmost importance for transition in crisis contexts. Communication skills and strategic planning capacity also vary from country to country and are rarely sufficient to promote an integrated approach to transition.
- There are limits on FAO in-house technical personnel that can be immediately mobilized to face sudden emergencies.
- An important difficulty to meet technical requirements during the design phase of transitional activities is that FAO needs to have already approved and funded projects to recruit technical personnel. In addition, technical staff recruited to provide immediate assistance for transitional activities usually have contracts of limited duration, as projects are often of a short duration. Thus a major constraint on technical qualifications of FAO in transitional situations is high staff turnover.
- Highly specialised FAO technical staff tend to focus only on technical aspects of their work, when analysis of the social, economic or political aspects may be indispensable for success in crisis-related contexts.

4.7.3 Information systems and data analysis for transition

Findings:

- In most countries visited by the evaluation team, FAO provides support to relevant ministries in data analysis and information systems in several ways. However, that support often appears fragmented and ad-hoc and not part of a strategic plan based on a systematic assessment of information support needs.
- FAO appeared to have been relatively effective in supporting, assembling and analysing relevant information for transition, which were used by international and national partners/institutions, although assessments were mostly confined to short-term needs and requirements.
- The IPC is an important tool for creating consensus among national stakeholders (and an increased level of accountability) in cases of emergencies, as well as indirectly supporting resource mobilization. Furthermore, the IPC serves an important function by encouraging local level coordination around food security issues (stakeholders meeting at the same table at national and sub-national level). Whereas the IPC Acute Scale is useful for humanitarian responses, the IPC Chronic Scale promises to prove useful to inform transition work and the resilience framework, and for medium and long-term decision-making in protracted (food security) crises.
- The Resilience Index Measurement and Analysis (RIMA), though still quite new, appears to be a relevant tool for assessing resilience at intra-country level and has been used for developing baselines, e.g. in West Bank and Gaza Strip. The weakness is, however, that it cannot be used for comparison across countries and that it requires high quality statistical data.
- FAO has been actively involved in various types of food security, land use and crop and food supply assessments, most often in collaboration with government and other UN agencies in countries visited. There were also cases where FAO's role was less prominent.
- There was no evidence that conflict assessments had been carried out in the visited countries despite the prevalence of conflicts, in line with the findings regarding the CPFs.
- Overall, FAO was found better organized and equipped around post-*disaster* needs assessments than post-*conflict* needs assessments.

4.7.4 Capacity Development

Findings:

- Capacity development does not appear prominent in FAO's work in crisis- or post-crisis contexts even though it is one of its Core Functions. It is mostly limited to individual training, except a few cases where organizational capacity development is promoted. Capacity development in transitional activities was too often limited to short-term technical training, not sufficient to ensure sustainability, although it was very relevant.
- Lack of an overall framework for capacity development was often claimed as a key constraint, which may have been overcome if FAO's Corporate Capacity Development Strategy had been adapted to the country within the CPF. There was little awareness of

how to programme capacity development initiatives of overall relevance in difficult circumstances.

- Farmer Field Schools (FFS) and Pastoralist Field Schools (PFS) are part of a successful capacity development methodology promoted by FAO and implemented as a complement to emergency operations. It is highly appreciated by recipient countries.

4.8 *Partnerships in transition contexts*

4.8.1 *Partnerships in FAO*

Findings:

FAO realizes that leadership in its mandated areas in crisis or post-crisis situations requires mobilization of knowledge and capacities that are not necessarily always within the Organization. This requires the establishment of partnerships and alliances with all types of different organizations, within the UN system, research circles, government and public institutions, civil society organizations, NGOs and private sector, inter-governmental and regional entities, to collaborate for a common purpose.

4.8.2 *Partnering with the government: evidence from country case studies and consultations with multiple stakeholders*

Findings:

FAO has traditionally and by constitution maintained close partnerships with government institutions. High levels of trust between FAO and national governments at times gave FAO a unique position in influencing policy and negotiating on behalf of the UN Country Team and other development partners, even in difficult crisis-related contexts. When conditions improve, this prolonged presence of FAO gave it a special comparative advantage, which is often positive to promote a transition process. However, in conflict-related contexts that close relationship to governments may be problematic, running the risk of compromising the application of the Humanitarian Principles of humanity and neutrality toward vulnerable populations.

4.8.3 *Partnering with UN agencies, regional and sub-regional institutions and international development partners*

Findings:

- Partnerships with UN agencies were frequent in countries in crisis, especially with WFP and UNICEF. In Africa they focus on joint positions on resilience. Other UN partners are UNDP, ILO, IFAD, and UNEP, inter alia. Rivalries and competition too are frequent.

Another opportunity for partnership includes that with UNHCR around Durable Solutions, where FAO is well positioned to contribute to land tenure dimensions of UNHCR's work with IDPs and Returnees.

- Partnerships with regional bodies were found to be more visible and well defined when FAO plays the role of a key partner.

4.8.4 *Partnerships with Civil Society*

Findings:

- In spite of great progress at the global level in FAO's efforts to partner with civil society, at the national level, FAO's engagement with the civil society has not yet played a key role in responding to crisis and post-crisis situations. In occasional cases, relationships with some CSOs are discouraged by the national government.
- Partnerships of FAO with civil society in emergencies at the country level are predominantly with NGOs and are predominantly for service delivery as implementing partners of FAO's activities, not really a true partnership, which could use the unique position of the local NGOs for their knowledge of local conditions. Nonetheless, in some cases, FAO has direct and non-contractual relationships with NGOs and CSOs, e.g. in the context of the Clusters.
- In many cases, FAO has more limited engagement with local NGOs and CBOs as compared with other UN agencies, although use of local NGOs as implementing partners of FAO projects is frequent in emergency operations, and often essential in areas where security constraints are severe.

4.9 *Advocacy for a new approach to transition and resilience*

Findings:

- Concern for advocacy for a new approach to transition and resilience is very present in several initiatives promoted by FAO, especially (but not only) since the adoption of the Reviewed Strategic Framework.
- FAO is trying to advocate for a resilience agenda promoting concepts and interacting with other actors in the international scene in order to promote this new approach to crisis-response, integrating long-term initiatives with short-term concerns from the very start.
- At the country level, FAO's advocacy has been particularly effective as a resource mobilization tool in some cases (e.g. Philippines, Uganda, Somalia), making use of its main catch-phrase: "saving livelihoods."
- With the exception of West Bank and Gaza Strip, Somalia and South Sudan, FAO has not been very pro-active and effective in doing advocacy in a conflict-related situation, avoiding politically sensitive themes even if they are related to the ultimate purpose of the resilience agenda. Not enough attention has been given to the use of advocacy work to focus on key issues for the resilience agenda, including selection criteria, protection of the livelihoods of the most vulnerable populations, land tenure and other themes that are behind conflicts and tensions within the country.