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PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

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EVALUATION OF FAO'S INTERVENTIONS FUNDED BY THE CENTRAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE FUND (CERF) - MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

A. OVERALL RESPONSE TO THE EVALUATION

1. FAO management welcomes the Evaluation of FAO's interventions funded by the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), which was requested in anticipation of, and as a contribution to the five-year global evaluation of the CERF, foreseen in 2011. FAO management appreciated the process and methodology of the Evaluation conducted during 2009-2010, based on a wide consultation of stakeholders at global, regional, national and local levels.
2. FAO management fully agrees with the positive findings highlighting the importance of FAO's role in emergency and rehabilitation work, and the crucial role of the CERF as a key financial instrument for FAO, providing early funding for response to the most pressing needs shortly after a sudden-onset disaster or early enough in a slow-onset crisis.
3. The overall conclusion reinforces the FAO Strategic Framework, Strategic Objective I (SO-I) and its team towards: "Improved preparedness for, and effective response to, food and agricultural threats and emergencies". The CERF Evaluation directly contributes to one of the three organizational results, "the effective response". The recommendations are in line with those of the evaluation of FAO's operational capacity in emergencies¹ conducted in 2008-09 and are supporting the implementation of the Operational Strategy of the Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation Division (TCE) over the period 2011-13, aiming at responding faster to the needs of beneficiaries and moving to a more comprehensive approach reflecting preparedness, response and transition.
4. The recommendations have been reviewed by SO-I team members and by other concerned units. Many of the issues were already known and worked on as part of the development of an overall programmatic framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and Management. in support of the implementation of the SO-I.
5. The recommendations will be addressed during the current and next biennia. The implementation of some of the recommendations will also require additional resources and

¹ PC 103/7 - FC 132/10

extrabudgetary funding will have to be mobilized by the SO-I team to support further FAO's effectiveness in responding to emergencies.

6. FAO management accepts or partially accepts all eighteen recommendations (fully accepts fourteen, and partially accepts four) addressed to the Organization. In addition, the CERF Secretariat fully accepts two, partially accepts one and rejects one of the four recommendations directed at the CERF. The synthesis hereunder is followed by detailed comments on the recommendations (see section B) presented in a standard matrix format, also indicating those recommendations needing further funding in order to be implemented.

*Needs assessment, priority setting and project design and quality assurance
(recommendations 1-4)*

7. FAO management accepts the four needs assessment and priority setting recommendations. These reinforce better preparedness in terms of knowledgeable human resources, participation to multistakeholders needs assessment, early warning systems, livelihoods profiles, agro-ecological cropping calendars, improved standardized technical approaches for rapid responses, etc.

Efficiency and timeliness (recommendations 6-10)

8. FAO management accepts the five recommendations on efficiency and timeliness, including the need for resources to be dedicated to staff training to improve the "emergency expertise" across FAO and its member countries. Management is also committed to further improving procurement preparedness to systemize a timely delivery of the most adapted farming inputs.

Partnership and coordination (recommendations 11-15)

9. FAO management accepts three and partially accepts two of the recommendations in relation to partnership and coordination. Partnership and coordination are central to the achievement of SO-I, especially now with the establishment of the new Global Food Security Cluster co-lead by FAO and WFP, which will in particular contribute to the inclusiveness of partners in the preparation and implementation of emergency responses.

Equity and targeting (recommendations 16-17)

10. FAO management partially accepts the two recommendations on equity and targeting. The general meaning of the recommendation is valid, focusing on village or community targeting but should be nuanced. For example, in the case of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), targeting is a more complex and delicate task where neutral actors are needed to arbitrate. Similarly, delegation of procurement to some implementing partners is against FAO's rules and procedures, but promoting voucher-based distribution is welcomed, when feasible.

Results (recommendations 18-19)

11. FAO management fully accepts these two recommendations. Together with other agencies, the Organization will continue to advocate that livelihoods protection is a legitimate humanitarian issue aiming to support the resilience of experienced economic actors whose technical know-how deserves respect and attention during planning and implementation of interventions.

CERF-directed recommendations (recommendations 20 to 22 plus 5)

12. The CERF Secretariat welcomed the Evaluation and its findings were also presented by FAO at the CERF advisory board meeting in October 2010. CERF prepared a specific management response to the Evaluation of FAO's interventions funded by the CERF that will be shared at its next advisory board meeting in April 2011. The CERF Secretariat rejected recommendation five, questioning the seasonal delays in approval of CERF projects found by the Evaluation. CERF partially accepted one recommendation on the proposed amendment of narrative reports, including standard timelines, which is acceptable in principle, but difficult to impose across all United Nations agencies. CERF accepted two recommendations stressing the need to continue the flexible interpretation of the "life-saving" criteria and recommending peer review of project narrative reports by the United Nations country teams.

Evaluation Recommendation	Management Accepted, partially accepted or rejected and COMMENT on the Recommendation	Management – Action to be taken			
		Action	Responsible Unit	Timeframe	Further funding required (Y or N)
1. Building upon its development programme and long-term presence in most countries, FAO should continue to <u>mobilize knowledgeable specialists</u> from the government, pre-existing development projects and NGOs to participate in needs assessments	Accepted This recommendation stresses the need for preparedness for response and is in line with Strategic Objective I (SO-I) and specifically OR1 ² with the development and implementation of a Framework Programme on Disaster Risk Reduction/Management.	1.1 As part of SO-I, continue to develop and update a roster for knowledgeable specialist in countries where FAO has a long-term presence and a significant field programme	SO-I team	MTP 2010-13	Y
2. Time permitting, FAO should strive to <u>participate in multi-stakeholder needs assessments</u> to buttress objectivity, accuracy and transparency in identifying needs and priorities after disasters that are likely to have affected many sectors.	Accepted FAO - Participation in multistakeholder assessments is hampered by a lack of a specific needs assessment funding mechanism (particularly with International Financial Institutions [IFIs]).	2.1 Explore IFI funding opportunities for multistakeholder needs assessments in the aftermath of disasters. 2.2 Seek accreditation for FAO to become part of the UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) mechanism. 2.3 Within FAO, identify and train a pool of staff to participate in UNDAC team on post disaster multistakeholders needs assessments.	SO-I team	Current MTP 2010-13	Y
3. In the most disaster-prone countries, the Organisation should continue to support <u>early warning systems and/or the collection of simple livelihoods profiles</u> and agricultural calendars developed on the basis of farmers' own knowledge initially captured at needs assessment time and further refined throughout the	Accepted FAO - This recommendation puts emphasis on SO-I and its prevention and preparedness efforts underway. Food security risk assessment, monitoring, analysis and early warning are key elements of the programmatic approach being developed for Disaster Risk	3.1 Implement the SO-I DRR/M Framework Programme on "security risk assessment, monitoring, analysis and early warning" in selected focal countries (i.e. countries where FAO has HAD a significant field programme over time).	SO-I team	PWB 2012-13	Y

² SO-I is "Improved preparedness for, and effective response to, food and agriculture threats and emergencies" and includes 3 Organizational Results articulated along the Disaster Risk Management (DRM) approach.

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response under the aegis of the agriculture or food security cluster (or a similar coordination mechanism)	Reduction and Management (DRR/M) under SO-I.				
4. A standardization of CERF projects technical approaches is desirable from a quality control view point, following the approach developed by the Seed and Plant Genetic Resources Service. By virtue of their short duration, CERF projects must use simple and standard approaches and concentrate on replacing the most urgently needed production assets to ensure some level of food production and incomes, rather than aim at increasing food production levels as compared to pre-crisis times (see also recommendation 20).	Accepted FAO - This further reinforces the need to improve the efficiency of emergency interventions in the immediate 6 months after a crisis building on over 10 years of FAO agriculture humanitarian experience. Whenever possible, FAO will do more than replace the most urgent assets, aiming to “build back better” from the very start of the crisis and to increase food production with CERF funded interventions. The SO-I team is working on this issue. CERF - <i>The CERF Secretariat also welcomes the “standardization of CERF projects’ technical approaches” proposed in this recommendation. The availability of standardized project approaches would be beneficial to ensuring rapid finalization of project proposals in an acute or sudden onset emergency.</i>	4.1 For 3 main types of CERF funded interventions in line with life-saving and time-critical criteria, develop and/or consolidate 3 standard technical approaches and/or project profiles. 4.2 The CERF Secretariat stands ready to work with FAO’s Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation Division to review potential standardized project approaches.	SO-I team CERF Secretariat, Programme Unit will support FAO to that effect.	2011-2012	N
5. If confirmed by the 5-year evaluation of the CERF, seasonal delays in the approval of CERF projects, due to a large number of UFE projects to be processed at specific times in the year, deserve consideration by the CERF Secretariat with a view to “insulate” rapid response projects from this effect, i.e. ensure that the approval process for RR projects remains unaffected by delays in the UFE window.	Rejected CERF - <i>Throughout 2010, CERF secretariat remained within it stated time limits. The inclusion of additional staff in the CERF Secretariat has decreased past delays.</i>	5.1 CERF - <i>The CERF Secretariat will continue to monitor timeliness to ensure prompt review, approval and disbursement of projects.</i>	CERF NY Secretariat		N

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6. Programme staff need to be better aware of the typical delivery durations to expect from various procurement approaches and should start procurement and contracting as early as possible; “pre-procurement” (starting procurement before the official project start date) should become the rule for CERF Rapid Response projects; repeat orders are a very powerful tool for rapid delivery, when based on previous tenders that were well conducted and answered to by a sufficient number of suppliers.	Accepted FAO - FAO is committed to improving procurement preparedness (repeat order, stand-by arrangements, training of staff) before the official CERF project start date, i.e. the date of the USG letter announcing the approval of the grant to FAO Rome.	6.2 Continue to train FAO staff at headquarters and in decentralised offices on new procurement rules and procedures (field manual), stressing the importance of procurement planning and timing.	TCE and CSAP	MTP 2010-2013	Y especially for training of staff in DOs
7. Taking greater account, and in some countries developing a more precise knowledge of how cropping calendars change from one locality, elevation or agro-ecological zone to the next would allow field teams to better schedule delivery and provide farming inputs before rather than during the sowing season, it is often the case currently. It may also help judge when catching the next season is doable and when it is more realistic to aim at subsequent seasons (see recommendation 8).	Accepted FAO - FAO's ultimate goal is to reach crisis-stricken beneficiaries before the cropping season starts.	7.1 Standardize and disseminate information on agro-ecological zones cropping calendars for focal or priority countries (i.e. those where FAO has had a significant programme over time). 7.2 Ensure systematic recruitment of sound agronomists and implement quality briefing of new international and national FAO staff on the importance of respecting agro-ecological zones of cropping calendars. The same would apply for NGO implementing partners.	TCE, SO-I team	PWB 2012-13	Y
8. Based on the selected procurement approach and possibilities of a repeat order or not, programme staff should make an educated guess about whether or not asking for CERF funds to “ catch the next crop ”. As a rule of thumb, if one can do a	Accepted FAO - FAO should always try to “catch the crop” whenever possible and request CERF funding with that aim. All efforts should continue to improve procurement preparedness for highly vulnerable areas	8.1 Improve procurement preparedness and possibly stand-by agreements with suppliers for main crops in highly and chronically vulnerable areas.	SO-I team and CSAP, with support of <i>CERF NY Secretariat Programme Unit</i>	MTP 2010-13	N

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repeat order or sole source contract with a supplier that has the goods in stock, one should expect a lead time of one to two months from procurement start to delivery of the inputs to farmers. This lead time jumps to a bare minimum of 3 months, and more likely a period from 4 to 6 months if the procurement needs to be tendered nationally or internationally.	and to reduce the procurement lead time to 1 month. <i>CERF - The CERF Secretariat will work with FAO on whether or not to apply for CERF funds in cases where project inputs might not arrive in time for the planting season. The time-critical nature of projects in the agricultural sector, in that activities are tied to planting seasons, is well understood by CERF.</i>	<i>8.2 CERF - The implementation of the six month rapid response window will assist FAO in this regard. The issue has already been taken up in the November 2010 annual consultations between the CERF Secretariat and FAO, and will be continued.</i>			
9. To support and manage the early response to emergency situations, the FAO development-oriented staff at country level need to acquire “emergency expertise” through the provision of an ongoing and specific awareness raising and implementation training programme. This may require to integrate emergencies in corporate training programmes, and to devote resources either from the FAO regular programme budget or from donors to training staff and consultants at the country level on the management of emergency programmes	Accepted FAO – FAO initiated an emergency training programme for FAO development oriented staff in 2006. This initiative will be further expanded.	9.1 Launch the DRM e-learning tool in mid-2011 and encourage all development oriented staff to undertake the online course. 9.2 Adapt and repeat the FAOR course on emergencies.	SO-I team	DRM e-learning launched by end of 2011; FAOR training over 2012-13	Y
10. The FAO corporate information management systems need to catch up with increasingly decentralized operations. Ultimately, the Oracle systems used by FAO for accounting, managing human resources and processing procurement orders should be expanded to support field operations, including accounting, LoAs tracking and the monitoring of procurement. As developing and rolling out	Accepted FAO - This recommendation is in line with the evaluation of FAO's operational capacity. Best operational management practices exist and need to be harmonized and consolidated in one emergency operations management toolkit (EOMT) while key corporate systems slowly evolve to better serve	10.1 Standard Operations Procedures (SOPs) developed and combined in an EOMT for human resources, procurement, contract and LoA management.	SO-I team and CIO	PWB 2012-13	N

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these applications at the country level may take some time, an emergency operations management tool kit is required in the interim ³ .	decentralized offices and improve FAO's preparedness to respond to crisis.				
11. FAO, while upholding the humanitarian principle of neutrality, should continue to develop and maintain working relationships with governmental and non-governmental actors, with a preference for actors with a long-term commitment and good community links in the targeted areas, to allow faster and more effective emergency programmes and to facilitate sustainability and the transition into subsequent recovery and development programmes.	Accepted FAO - Linked to recommendation 1, this recommendation is at the centre of the SO-I approach and its objective to work in partnership and support of capacity development of longer-term national partners/actors.	11.1 As part of SO-I, continue to develop the mapping and partnership arrangements with key partners (governments, NGOs and others) in focal countries where FAO has had a long-term presence and a significant field programme.	SO-I team	MTP 2010-13	N
12. FAO should include core implementing partners in the scoping, design and specification of proposed interventions more than is currently the case; FAO should also support valuable projects designed directly by partners themselves, when appropriate	Partially accepted FAO - The new Manual Section 507 partially supports the application of this recommendation and clarifies the role of NGOs, non-profit organizations etc., when they provide services. The development of the procedures and rules governing partnerships of the type described in the recommendation ("real substantive partners ...") requires another, more complex form of "partnership agreement" under the Partnership Committee (DBG 2010/22)	12.1 Apply the newly revised manual as soon as it has been approved on the collaboration with Implementing Partners (IPs) in emergency and rehabilitation interventions for delivery of services. 12.2 Reinforce and develop stand-by (substantive) partnership agreements with at least two key international partners.	TCE and CSA	MTP 2010-13	N

³ This recommendation is in line with recommendations 5.2 and 5.3 of the Evaluation of FAO operational capacity in emergencies.

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13. To <u>equalize the relationship with implementing partners</u> , the new FAO Manual Section 507 and new partnership instrument should be completed as soon as possible and made available to operational teams	Accepted FAO - See recommendation 12. In addition, MS 507 parallels the relationship between FAO and Service Providers by recognizing that they are providing a service and not receiving a handout, but it does not go so far as to fully recognize them as "partners" unless already subject to a "partnership agreement".	13.1 Complete and launch the new Manual Section 507 on provision of services and partnership.	CSA	End of 2011	N
14. Just as donors and FAO sometimes insist that local partners give some visibility to their assistance by putting their logos on boards or publications ("downward visibility"), <u>FAO should systematically include the logos of its implementing partners in project completion reports</u> and brochures to recognise the importance of their contribution ("upward visibility")	Partially accepted FAO - This recommendation should be applied according to the proportion of funds allocated to IPs. If 50% of a project is implemented thanks to the IP, then visibility is guaranteed, while for smaller amounts, it could lead to confusion.	14.1 In the overall TCE communication guidelines, insert a specific recommendation on the visibility of IPs where a significant role is played in project implementation.	TCE	End of 2011	N
15. <u>Support from FAO to IPs in the form of technical assistance and training</u> during emergency responses, should ideally be conveyed by national experts with strong field experience.	Accepted FAO - This recommendation is at the centre of the SO-I approach aiming to work in partnership and support of capacity development of longer-term national partners/actors. In-country, this is done via the cluster system and should be reinforced by the newly established Global Food Security (FS) Cluster, which promotes partnerships and local capacities.	15.1 Support the joint FAO-WFP FS cluster to better serve and assist country FS clusters and other related clusters dealing with agriculture and livelihoods.	SO-I team and global FS cluster team	End of 2011	Y
16. In the immediate response to a disaster, and hence in most CERF rapid response projects, <u>targeting for assets</u>	Partially Accepted FAO - FAO agrees with the	16.1 For asset replacement in the immediate emergency phase, develop standard criteria and guidance based on best/good practices	SO-I team	MTP 2010-13	N

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replacement projects should focus at the village level (selection of most affected villages). In the interest of saving time and protecting cohesion/social capital at the community level at a time when they need it most, the targeted communities should be provided with the opportunity to decide how they want the proposed inputs distributed in a transparent way.	recommendation in principle, in communities where social cohesion still exists. With displaced people, targeting is a more complex and delicate task where neutral actors are needed to arbitrate.	for targeting affected households in rural areas at community levels, in relation to the prevailing degree of social cohesion. This implies that monitoring and accountability tasks also be standardized by FAO and shared with the IP (see recommendation 10).			
17. Just as FAO headquarters have delegated implementation for some of larger procurement activities to field offices, there may be opportunities to improve the effectiveness of procurement by delegating procurement of some items to the IPs or directly to the beneficiaries through a voucher and fair system , especially when the type of inputs to supply varies significantly from one locality to the next. Experience from the pilot voucher-based distributions in Africa should be incorporated into FAO procedures and emergency operations management tool kits. However, when used in the context of a CERF project, input fairs should be kept as simple as possible, avoiding complex work-vouchers schemes.	Partially accepted FAO - Whenever feasible, implementing inputs distributions via voucher and fair system is strongly encouraged and carried out. However, requesting implementing partners to purchase goods is contrary to existing FAO's rules and procedures.	17.1 When feasible, promote voucher systems as per annex to the procurement manual based on Southern Africa experience (see recommendation 10 above on EOMT).	TCE and CSA	MTP 2010-13	N
18. FAO should always procure varieties / breeds / types that are the same as those currently used in the target areas and are familiar to beneficiaries, particularly in the emergency and early rehabilitation phase.	Accepted FAO - This is part of the emergency best practices and should constantly be communicated at headquarters and decentralized offices.	18.1 In partnership with OEKC, research and document good practices promoting local varieties/breeds and develop a standard operating procedure (SOP) on this issue (see recommendation 10).	SO-I team	MTP 2010-13	Y

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19. FAO and other organizations involved in livelihoods should continue to <u>advocate, on behalf of the very communities they are trying to help, for livelihood protection as a legitimate humanitarian issue</u> , recognizing however that this line of work differs from palliative relief operations in that it aims to support the resilience of experienced economic actors whose technical know-how deserves respect and attention during needs assessment, selection of deliverables and timing of their delivery (see recommendations 3, 20 and 7, respectively).	Accepted FAO - FAO fully recognizes the need to strongly advocate for agriculture-based livelihoods protection in humanitarian arenas. <i>CERF - The CERF Secretariat, in cooperation with global cluster leads, revised the guidelines on the life-saving criteria in 2009 to take advantage of lessons learned over the course of three years of preparing, reviewing and implementing CERF projects. The CERF Secretariat believes that the guidelines in their current form contain adequate flexibility to support a range of emergency agriculture and livelihoods projects.</i>	19.1 FAO reinforces its communication/ advocacy in favour of agriculture livelihoods importance and protection with donor, affected governments and other UN agencies. <i>19.2 The CERF Secretariat continues to monitor project submissions to assess the need for any future revision to the guidelines.</i>	TCE and OEK CERF NY Secretariat with FAO's support (TCE)	MTP 2010-13	Y for a strong advocacy role
20. The " <u>life-saving</u> " criterion of the <u>CERF should continue to be interpreted flexibly</u> as a bulwark to focus the funds on humanitarian needs, including the protection of self-reliant livelihoods and food availability through time-critical agricultural interventions in accordance with CERF sectoral guidelines.	Accepted FAO - FAO promotes the notion that self-reliant livelihoods and local food production, availability and security are crucial. It requires additional advocacy and communication to improve understanding among humanitarian stakeholders and through the global, regional and national cluster system. <i>CERF - The CERF Secretariat believes that the revised guidelines on life-saving criteria contain adequate flexibility to support a range of emergency agriculture and livelihoods projects.</i>	20.2 FAO continues to brief and communicate with the UN RC/HC, UN Country teams and cluster leads on the importance of interventions promoting self-reliant agriculture-based livelihoods and local food availability in response to crisis.	FAO (via SO-I team and FAOR) with support from CERF NY Secretariat	MTP 2010-13	N

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21. The CERF Secretariat should amend the narrative report format so that each and every CERF annual country report contains, per sector and for each agency, a timeline of interventions, including the dates for procurement and delivery of assistance to beneficiaries.	Partially Accepted <i>CERF - The CERF secretariat would be very interested in receiving this information from implementing agencies. However, making it a formal reporting requirement will depend on its applicability beyond classic, distribution-oriented projects, as well as agencies' ability to consistently provide this information. The CERF Secretariat is also collecting part of this information through the Performance and Accountability Framework.</i> FAO - This recommendation would also require a corporate system that captures accurate and relevant procurement data about the procurement process at central and field level, In the absence of such a system, it will not be possible for FAO to effectively implement this recommendation in the near future.	21.1 The CERF Secretariat is also collecting part of this information through its Performance and Accountability Framework 21.2 FAO to investigate the feasibility of having common standard timelines of interventions including dates of procurement and delivery to IPs and beneficiaries and simple tracking/monitoring of procurement for FAO at headquarters and field level in some focal countries and as part of the proposed EOMT mentioned in recommendation 10 above.	<i>CERF NY Secretariat Reporting Unit</i> TCE and CSA	End of 2013	Y
22. Clusters and the UNCT should be tasked to review narrative reports and the performance of each project annually, with a view to providing some degree of peer review and improving report quality. Along the same lines and similarly to what is often the case during needs assessments, the clusters and UNCT could usefully evaluate responses and learn from the experience as a group.	Accepted FAO - Recommendation fully supported in principle by FAO. Nonetheless, the reality of emergency staff subject to strict time constraints makes such exercises very difficult to carry out on a regular basis. <i>CERF - While it is the CERF Secretariat's understanding that narrative reports should already be reviewed by agencies and clusters in the manner</i>	22.1 In FAO, promote lesson learning and sharing within the cluster system for CERF-funded interventions and possibly with the production of at least one lesson learned per project. 22.2 <i>CERF Secretariat will further encourage the review of CERF project narrative reports by the UNCT.</i>	FAO TCE Emergency Coordinators in country, in regions and headquarters CERF NY Secretariat and participating UN agencies, including FAO	End of 2012	N/A

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	<i>described, this will be further encouraged.</i>				