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Evaluation of FAO's Regional and Subregional Offices for Latin America and the Caribbean

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Executive summary

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Office of Evaluation (OED)

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Executive summary

Background

ES1. At its 106th session in April 2011, the FAO Programme Committee (PC) received the report and the management response to the Evaluation of FAO's regional and subregional offices for the Near East. The PC appreciated the quality of the report, considered it to be a significant evaluation and recommended that similar evaluations be developed for other regions.

ES2. The programme of work for evaluations in the period 2012-14 took into account the recommendations of the PC. The evaluation of Europe was completed in December 2012 and presented at the 113th session of the Programme Committee in March 2013, while the report for Africa was presented at the 114th session of the Programme Committee in November 2013. The evaluations for Latin America and the Caribbean, and for Asia and the Pacific, were carried out in 2013.

ES3. All parties involved were fully aware that the evaluation would be carried out in a period of substantial changes and transition for FAO, which were also related to the process of decentralization. Nevertheless, it was felt that evaluation would provide additional and more in-depth proof of the decentralization challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean (ALC), identify useful lessons and result in recommendations for implementing the FAO decentralization policy in the region.

ES4. The FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) has been responsible for coordinating and managing the evaluation. The evaluation team, led by an independent external consultant, also included other external consultants as well as OED officials. OED ensured the overall quality of the report by submitting the draft report to an internal peer-review process.

Objectives

ES5. The objective of evaluation was to provide FAO and Member countries with an independent assessment of:

- the progress made by the Organization in implementing corporate decisions to decentralize its functions and roles in the Region; and
- the results of FAO's decentralization policies and procedures on corporate delivery to its Members in the Region.

ES6. The terms of reference established the period 2004-2012 as the time frame for evaluating the decentralization actions undertaken since the previous evaluation in 2004. However, considering that the region's decentralization processes mainly took off from January 2010 onwards, the terms of reference suggested focusing on recent years (including the decisions taken by the FAO Council in June 2012 on the Structure and Functioning of the Decentralized Offices). The discussion of the terms of reference for the Evaluation was taking place during implementation of a restructuring of the operations and duties of the Division for Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation (TCE). OED therefore decided not to include Haiti or Colombia in its field visits. This is why the Evaluation did not include a

detailed analysis of the decentralization of the work of the Division for Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation.

ES7. The decentralized structures analysed include the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (RLC) in Santiago, Chile; the FAO Subregional Office for the Caribbean (SLC) in Bridgetown, Barbados; the FAO Subregional Office for Mesoamerica (SLM) in Panama City, Panama; fully-fledged FAO Representations (FAOR), FAO Representations with a Technical Officer/Representative and multiple-accredited FAO Representations and National Correspondents. All of these decentralized structures are referred to in this document as Decentralized Offices (DOs).

ES8. Given the strengthened role of Regional Conferences resulting from FAO reform and the decentralization process, FAO governance in the region was also analysed, as well as the readiness and capacity of DOs to tackle the strategic and programme priorities of the Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean (LARC).

ES9. Furthermore, the evaluation has been carried out at the same time as discussions, approval and implementation of the new FAO Strategic Framework and its new 2014-17 Medium-Term Plan. This has dramatically shifted the Organization's focus towards the five Strategic Objectives by generating different institutional designs and operational frameworks. The evaluation has attempted to incorporate the new institutional environment in terms of assessing the potential, threats and opportunities of the decentralization process.

ES10. Lastly, with an eye towards the future, the evaluation has analysed FAO capacity to establish strategic partnerships to increase its effectiveness in the region and mobilize national, regional and international resources to ensure a sustained presence in the region.

Methodology

ES11. The evaluation subjects were tackled using a series of quantitative and qualitative methods and tools, including the following:

- Desk study and analysis of policies, strategies, circulars, bulletins and any other relevant document aimed at strengthening the FAO network and processes and procedures for FAO work in countries;
- Desk study and analysis of thematic and country evaluations and relevant projects relating to the region that have been implemented during the period in question;
- Use of audit reports produced by the FAO Office of the Inspector General to identify recurring themes that affect the work and impact achieved in countries;
- Semi-structured individual and group interviews with interested parties within and outside FAO, standardized using checklists and interview protocols specific to each type of party interviewed;
- Country visits and reports (for internal team use);
- Analysis of a sample of projects in countries visited and of the pilot initiative related to SO1;
- Analysis of CPFs approved by governments in accordance with a shared evaluation matrix;
- Analysis of downloaded web statistics and quotes from a sample of regional publications;
- Questionnaire sent to Member States to gather more opinions than those obtained on visits;

- Questionnaire to FAO staff at Headquarters, RLC, SLC, SLM and in countries to gather more opinions than those obtained on visits; and,
- Questionnaire for non-governmental organizations and other relevant civil-society actors.

ES12. Taking into account the principle of subsidiarity, the evaluation has analysed the comparative advantage of the various levels of the Organization (Headquarters, RLC, SLC, SLM, FAOR) in terms of responding to the expectations, requests and priorities of Member States. In this context, the subject of Delegated Authority has been tackled by analysing the transfer of duties and responsibilities to identify possible bottlenecks, overlap of functions and areas of ambiguity, as well as complex decision-making processes. The decentralized process of setting priorities using the Country Programming Framework (CPF) has also received special attention in the evaluation, with an analysis of the twenty-five (25) CPFs already approved by governments at the time of the evaluation.

ES13. The human resources of the DOs (size and organization chart, technical skill mix) have been analysed to evaluate their suitability for tackling corporate needs and priorities, as well as future challenges resulting from the new strategic and institutional framework.

ES14. A small sample of national initiatives (known as key projects) was analysed in practically all countries visited, in order to provide the evaluation team with a glimpse into a few initiatives and see the results of FAO work in the field. The criteria for selecting key projects were: relevance for country, intervention sector (with priority given to food security and family farming), balance amongst different type of projects (such as Technical Cooperation Programme, Cooperation Programme involving FAO and national/regional governments and so on), recently completed projects and those that had not yet been evaluated. In accordance with the request from subregional and regional offices, the pilot initiative related to SO1, “Contribute to the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition”, was evaluated in the three countries concerned (Antigua and Barbuda, Ecuador and Nicaragua).

ES15. The evaluation has focused on the effectiveness and cost efficiency of the region’s thirty-six (36) decentralized offices (33 country offices, two subregional offices and one regional office), through the identification of effectiveness and efficiency indicators and their trajectories throughout the 2004-2012 period. The methodology is valid, consistent and is used in other multilateral, bilateral and civil-society organizations. The indicators do, however, have limitations, as they do not provide specific information on particular countries or contexts. They have the potential to be considered as inputs for the Senior Management’s decision-making process.

Main findings and conclusions

ES16. As previously stated, the evaluation aimed to answer the following two questions: 1) what progress has the Organization made in implementing the corporate decisions to decentralize its duties and roles in Latin America and the Caribbean; 2) in what way has this progress (or lack thereof) impacted the Organization’s effectiveness and efficiency in the region.

ES17. Analysis has focused on the period 2008-2012, with a clear inflection point identified in 2010 (the Evaluation has involved building a database with over 5,000 data entries for the period 2004-2012).

ES18. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the Organization achieved decentralization by means of the following measures: a) progressive transfer of oversight for Country Offices to the RLC in Chile, and of the oversight for Regional and Subregional Offices to the Regional Representative; b) 2007 formal opening of the SLM in Panama, which actually scaled up its operations in 2010; c) establishment of Multidisciplinary Teams in Santiago (discontinued in 2012), Barbados and Panama; d) establishment of country-level strategic planning processes through the CPF; e) increased delegation of authority to Decentralized Offices, including the management of the Technical Cooperation Programme, Field Programme, letters of agreement, procurement and management of human resources; f) assignment of a governance function to LARC in the orientation of priorities and work in the region from 2010.

ES19. Advances in each of these processes have taken place at different speeds, and the level of implementation varies from case to case. However, the Organization has made progress in implementing the corporate decisions to decentralize its duties and roles in the region.

ES20. The Evaluation Team considers that the Country, Subregional and Regional Offices now have the authority to define priorities and mobilize resources at a level close to member countries. Decentralization established roles and responsibilities for the three types of Decentralized Offices. However, these roles are ambiguous, there is some overlap and they have not been efficiently communicated. This hinders clear distinctions between the method and purpose of the actions of each level of decentralization.

ES21. In terms of delegation of authority for technical support, most main Technical Officers were from Headquarters. Headquarters is also the Operational Unit for a significant proportion of the budget allocation.

ES22. The delegation of authority did not involve increased resources. In percentage terms, the Regular Programme's resources in the region have remained the same since 2010. Decentralization remains incomplete in terms of bringing the process of defining priorities and mobilizing resources closer to the country level.

ES23. As for estimating the effect of decentralization on the Organization's cost efficiency and effectiveness in the region, the Evaluation found few indicators available for analysis, and an absence of suitable data for carrying out estimates. The lack of suitable financial information shows that such data are not regularly used by Senior Management in decision-making. As stated in the Report, the database created for the period 2004-12 made it possible to analyse total annual expenditure (disbursements), including the Regular Programme and Field Programme, for each of the existing 36 units of analysis (33 Country Offices, 1 Regional Office and 2 Subregional Offices). For the same period and the same units of analysis, information was also consolidated on the functional use of financial disbursements (by type of expenditure including spending on professionals, spending on general services staff and other expenditure). This information was used to define and estimate two effectiveness indicators and three cost efficiency indicators to measure FAO performance in the region.

ES24. On the basis of the data analysed, the team found a clear increase in the effectiveness of the operations of the region's Offices between 2008 and 2012, according to the indicators used. The Organization significantly increased its presence and activities in the region during

that time. There was a substantial rise in the mobilization of extra-budgetary resources (Field Programme) per dollar allocated under the Regular Programme. Increased expenditure (disbursements) on the part of decentralized units reflects the widespread perception of the Organization's increased presence in the region. Greater mobilization of resources on the part of decentralized units is also an indicator of effective use of resources made available. Renewed commitment to voluntary contributions, particularly from the region's countries that have not traditionally been donors, shows that the Organization is providing relevant and efficient solutions to the region's development problems. The perceived rise in effectiveness is mainly due to increased activities of the Field Programme. This increase is mostly attributable to the mobilization of non-regular funding from bilateral donors (including a significant share from the region's countries). The dynamism of the programme and the presence in Mesoamerica is vital for this development and for the total figures for the period. FAO is closer to the reality and priorities of the region's countries and their governments. The Organization's interventions are becoming more relevant and appreciated by member countries.

ES25. The efficiency analysis shows no significant gains for the 2008-12 period, as efficiency remained mainly unchanged in comparison with the longer 2004-12 period. In many of the units studied, there appears to be an overweight of administrative costs that has no relation with the scale of professional and technical assistance and knowledge generation that are at the heart of FAO actions. In the short term, the Organization should concentrate its actions on this area. This is the sphere where the impact of remedial measures is likely to yield the fastest results.

ES26. During the Evaluation, the impression has been one of unclear roles, responsibilities and reporting lines of the various decentralized bodies and their staff. An immediate clarification for the region should yield rapid results. Lack of clarity in the reporting chain between Country Office, Subregional Office, Regional Office and Headquarters (in terms of administrative processes, contributions and specialized technical interactions) has caused major efficiency losses. There are undoubtedly areas in which Headquarters could be much more aggressive in its policy to decentralize responsibilities and implementation to decentralized units (recruitment, emergencies, donor negotiation and technical endorsement of projects).

ES27. There appears to be an imbalanced distribution of human, administrative and professional resources among the three subregions. This does not reflect the different levels of dynamism of the country programmes in each subregion. In some cases, the distribution of countries in each of the three subregions is questionable, as it does not reflect cultural links in terms of language, tradition or work synergies within the United Nations System.

ES28. The skill mix of Technical Officers has remained largely unchanged in the evaluation period (2004-12). It is difficult to see how this reflects the needs of countries and Country Offices, and it also bears little relation to the requirements of the FAO Strategic Objectives that have been in force since 2013.

ES29. The CPF is an important instrument of decentralization and has made a significant contribution to consolidating and expanding the Organization's presence in the region. Its role as a central tool for the work carried out in countries and for dialogue with governments should be emphasized. CPFs are useful for defining FAO's technical assistance priorities with member countries. They are in keeping with regional priorities, and most comply well

with the requirements of the CPF drafting guidelines. FAO should make more explicit use of CPFs in its corporate planning, monitoring and evaluation processes.

ES30. The Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) represents just under 10% of Field Programme expenditure in the region. The Evaluation found that the decentralization policy has not truly succeeded in bringing decisions and responsibilities down to country programme level, in accordance with the decentralization of CPFs. Large parts of the decision-making process were delegated to RLC from 2010 while some are still with departments at Headquarters. The approval process is confusing, slow and has generated widespread unease among Country Offices. However, the most striking weakness is that the Regional management has not managed to establish a clear, transparent, accepted and streamlined mechanism to allocate resources from the TCP. The Evaluation studied the link between allocations and socio-economic variables that should be in line with FAO priorities. The results were disappointing, as there was no correlation between socio-economic criteria that are important to FAO (such as food insecurity and rural poverty rates in the region) and the allocation of funds.

ES31. The use of integrated portfolio-management criteria, principles and indicators could make a sizeable contribution to improving the effectiveness and cost efficiency of FAO activities in the region. Given the relative importance of the Field Programme, there should be accounting routines to monitor its costs and ensure that its interventions are self-financing. This is without compromising an integrated portfolio management that harnesses synergies between the Regular Programme and the Field Programme.

ES32. The current management of funds obtained under Administrative and Operational Support (AOS) requires an in-depth review. Inexplicably, it is managed and accounted for as part of the Regular Programme, despite being generated by the Field Programme. The appropriation criteria across the various FAO bodies are confusing, inequitable and lack transparency, so it has become a structural disincentive for fundraising. The AOS could become an important part of consolidating a sustainability mechanism for the Field Programme, for instance in the form of a Reserve Fund.

ES33. The Evaluation Team analysed 10 specific projects in the 13 countries visited. It was established that Field Programme activities are a good reflection of the eleven priorities defined by the FAO Council for the period 2004-2012, with an emphasis on projects aimed at aspects of food security and actions to increase food supply based on family farming. There is no doubt that the five new Strategic Objectives and the Country Programming Frameworks will influence the FAO areas of involvement in the region.

ES34. The projects analysed are relevant for countries and interact well with national entities and local partners. This is more diluted at the national level, as the vast majority of Country Offices concentrate their actions and relations around the Ministries of Agriculture. Project design is simple and applied to the problems they seek to resolve. Most projects aim to increase food supply through well-known strategies. There were few interventions aimed at facilitating access to food by vulnerable groups (increasing food demand). There are doubts about the ability of some projects to make an impact at the national and regional levels, given their limited coverage. Questions have also been raised about the future sustainability of several projects.

ES35. In terms of the production and dissemination of FAO normative products, these are spread out among Headquarters, the Regional Office and a few Country Offices. No mechanism or tool was found to monitor the quantity, quality and level of use of FAO products and services in the region. The online download frequency of these documents is relatively low. The Regional Office has designed a widely used Results-based Monitoring and Evaluation System able to classify information according to the Logical Framework of projects and budgetary allocation. Its use is, however, limited to a few Offices and it lacks important components that would enable it to capitalize on successful experiences in the region.

ES36. As for the role of Technical Officers, their number has increased since 2008 and they have been redistributed as result of the creation of the SLM. The composition of Multidisciplinary Teams is weighted towards food production (including forestry production and fisheries). In practice, Technical Officers do not operate as multidisciplinary teams.

ES37. The Evaluation Team evaluated gender equity in the selected interventions. The projects reviewed work with women or with groups including many women. However, no efforts were detected at the institutional or project-design level to create the conditions enabling women to take advantage of their involvement by adapting project actions to the other roles carried out by women.

ES38. The Evaluation Team observed considerable imbalance between the number of women working in the Organization and the posts they occupy. The gender gap in the rural world appears to be reflected in the structure of the Organization.

ES39. The United Nations System appreciates FAO participation in joint planning instruments, mechanisms and bodies. However, knowledge of the Country Programming Framework is very limited. It was observed that there are no United Nations System Resident Coordinators coming originally from FAO in the region. It is suggested that FAO considers explicitly and more pro-actively promoting the inclusion of FAO staff in the group of candidates applying for posts of Resident Coordinator for the United Nations System in the region. This would increase the value added for the United Nations System at the country level and would help to incorporate a systemic UN view into FAO work in the region.

Recommendations

ES40. As stated in previous chapters, the Evaluation focused on developing a limited number of effectiveness and cost efficiency indicators. The indicators are valid, consistent and comparable. They are also used by other international organizations. They do, however, have limitations in terms of not covering national specificities or including methodological aspects discussed in the Evaluation. The decision-making process by FAO Senior Management should include the recommendations presented as inputs, to be completed with an analysis of particular aspects or conditions when it is required. The recommendations are presented with suggested measures that could of course be replaced by alternative combinations thereof.

Recommendation 1: FAO Senior Management at Headquarters and the Regional Office

FAO Senior Management at Headquarters and the RLC should consolidate FAO presence in the region. In order to do so, it should adopt new working models to adapt to the financial reality and the Organization's requirements to provide efficient and effective services to member countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Suggested measures:

Given the performance of Country Representations and the Regional and Subregional Offices in terms of the combined cost effectiveness and efficiency indicators in this Report, we recommend:

1. Transferring Cuba and the Dominican Republic from the Caribbean Subregion to the Mesoamerica Subregion. The former displays a weak performance in terms of effectiveness and efficiency. Overburdening the SLC with the task of managing different languages does not seem appropriate. Mesoamerica shows positive indicators that suggest it was right to open the Subregional Office in Panama. This change in reporting lines may help to improve effectiveness and efficiency indicators in the region. There are signs that Senior Management is considering some of these measures. Their immediate implementation would be a positive step. Senior Management could also evaluate the status and reporting lines of Haiti.
2. The increased responsibilities in Mesoamerica, the good performance of almost all the Subregion's Offices and the significant volume of operations form the basis for the recommendation to rebalance the location of Technical Officers in Santiago, Chile, and in Panama. FAO could make clear gains in effectiveness and efficiency by transferring Technical Officers from Santiago to Panama. Naturally, these measures could be strengthened by transferring Technical Officers from Rome to Panama.
3. The arrangement of Representations being managed by designated Technical Officers should be discontinued. This model provides no effectiveness or efficiency gains. The governments of the countries involved do not value this model.
4. For those units that remained in the same unfavourable position in the 2008-2012 period, plus those with a poorer evaluation, RLC should consider establishing multiple-accreditation systems, with a view to managing the portfolios of two or more countries. This recommendation could be applied to the following three groups of countries: Caribbean countries; Costa Rica; and Argentina, Chile and Uruguay in South America.
5. The aggregate technical profile of the current staff of Technical Officers in the region and subregions should be defined to manage the five new Strategic Objectives effectively and efficiently within the region. The strengthening of the Subregional Office for Mesoamerica should also be prioritized in the short term. The posts of Technical Officers still respond to the working priorities from 2004-2012. The opinion canvassed by the Evaluation about the technical support function of these Officers - and the speed, relevance and ubiquity of the services - was negative overall. Senior Management of FAO and RLC should restructure technical services and teams, in terms of specializations and geographical location. These teams should consider adopting truly multidisciplinary working arrangements and structures.
6. It is recommended that RLC and TCE strengthen the presence of Disaster Risk Management Officers in Central America and the Caribbean.

7. OSD, in collaboration with FAO Legal and Ethics Office (LEG), should review the existing Host Agreement arrangements at country level and formulate a plan to update them or sign new agreements where necessary in a reasonable time frame.

Recommendation 2: FAO Senior Management at Headquarters and the Regional Office

The Evaluation Team recommends that FAO senior management quickly implement an exhaustive process to clarify the scope of decentralization among its staff in the region, including on the roles and responsibilities between the three layers existing in ALC (regional, sub-regional and country) and HQ.

Suggested measures:

1. Emphasizing and clarifying the roles of the three levels of decentralized office (regional, subregional and national) and the subsidiarity criteria among them. This process should include a clarification of the role of Technical Officers that highlights their main function of supporting the implementation of FAO programmes in countries and providing advice at that level.
2. There is also a recommendation to clarify the approval process for Technical Cooperation Programmes and to eliminate redundant steps.
3. Improving communication and enhancing training on FAO contractual arrangements in Country Offices.

Recommendation 3: FAO Senior Management at Headquarters, the Regional Office and Country level

FAO Senior Management at Headquarters and the Regional Office should strengthen the use of Country Programming Frameworks (CPF) as the main instrument for establishing working arrangements and priorities in countries.

Suggested measures:

1. It is recommended that the Office of Support to Decentralization (OSD) and the RLC introduce an online digital platform for the drafting of CPFs, with a view to: a) making the provision of technical inputs by Technical Officers easier and more transparent; b) strengthening corporate information and keeping CPFs up to date; c) ensuring the use of CPF drafting guidelines, including maximum length, inclusion of monitoring targets and indicators, and an annual work plan.
2. Country Representatives must prioritize: 1) defining indicators, targets and baselines for the level of expected results; 2) establishing mechanisms for providing progress reports to governments; 3) integrating a portfolio-management approach to generate synergies and complementarities; 4) estimating needs in terms of mobilization of resources and the actions needed to obtain them.
3. Country Representations should develop short-term plans to disseminate their Country Programming Frameworks among the United Nations System Country Team, other donors and multilateral agencies in the country and wider sectors within host governments.
4. The Evaluation recommends that the RLC and Country Representatives ensure their future CPF drafting processes involve governmental counterparts other than those from

Ministries of Agriculture, as well as non-governmental partners (in accordance with the Organization's new strategies for the private sector and civil society).

5. It is recommended that OSD and the RLC institutionalize CPFs as the framework for establishing the work priorities of the entire Organization in the relevant countries. These CPFs should be formally authorized (with party signatures and validity period) in order to operate within a country. They should be respected by all FAO bodies and levels, including multidisciplinary teams, the RLC and Subregional Offices.
6. It is recommended that, as coordinators of the Multidisciplinary Teams, the regional management and subregional Directors should ensure that regional and subregional projects respond to and support the work streams agreed in the CPFs, and check that they match the new Strategic Objectives (SO). The variety of the CPFs should be reflected in regional and subregional projects, without the need to force the incorporation of countries or a uniform treatment thereof.

Recommendation 4: FAO Senior Management at Headquarters and at the Regional Office

FAO Senior Management at the Headquarters and at the Regional Office should consolidate the regional sphere as the priority intermediary between country-level and global priority-setting and planning, as well as adopting some efficiency measures as part of their processes.

Suggested measures:

1. This Evaluation found no grounds for recommending prioritizing areas and resources at the subregional level.
2. It is recommended that RLC and OSD consider options for a more efficient organization of the Regional Conference, for the Organization and for member countries. In this context, priority should be given to disseminating the new strategic framework among member country governments (including Ministries of Agriculture and other ministerial bodies).

Recommendation 5: FAO Senior Management at Headquarters and at the Regional Office

It is recommended that FAO manage the Field Programme with strict effectiveness and efficiency criteria.

Suggested measures:

1. RLC, with support from the South-South and Resource Mobilization Division (TCS) and the Office of Strategy, Planning and Resource Management (OSP), should monitor the Field Programme with explicit portfolio-management criteria and appropriate and up-to-date financial information. The Field Programme must have its own accounts, without prejudice to an integrated portfolio management. Its costs should be completely funded by the Programme itself. As recommended by many internal audits, this Evaluation supports the creation of a "Reserve Fund" in order to provide sustainability, a predictable time frame, innovation potential and to hedge against temporary funding shortfalls for field presence.
2. The Evaluation recommends that RLC establish clear and transparent criteria for distributing regional allocations under Technical Cooperation Programmes. A substantial

proportion should be subject to an automatic preliminary allocation according to variables relevant to FAO operations in the region (the Evaluation considered per capita gross national income, Atlas methodology, extreme poverty rates and undernutrition rates).

3. It is recommended that the RLC establish an advisory board made up of regional FAO representatives to advise on issues relating to the allocation of resources under regional and subregional Technical Cooperation Programmes.

Recommendation 6: FAO Senior Management at Headquarters and at the Regional Office

FAO should improve the operational and financial management of the Regular Programme and Field Programme in the region.

Suggested measures:

1. RLC, with support from OSP, should collect relevant financial information for ongoing monitoring of the progress of operations and portfolio management. Information on expenditure (disbursements) by year, unit of analysis, source of funds and use thereof is vital for regular evaluations of the effectiveness and cost efficiency of the portfolio. This Evaluation made considerable efforts to compile the first database for 2004-2012 and to develop a few indicators for assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of the portfolio management. FAO could benefit from adopting, adding to, continuing and stepping up such endeavours in the short and medium term.
2. Management of information on Administrative and Operational Support (AOS) should be dramatically restructured as soon as possible. This Evaluation recommends that AOS obtained from field operation support should be clearly and transparently recorded as part of the Field Programme, then rapidly and regularly allocated and under no circumstances retained at Headquarters. The Evaluation recommends that AOS collected should be distributed as follows: a) 60% to the unit responsible for the mobilization of funding; b) 20% to RLC; and c) 20% for Headquarters in Rome. AOS distributed according to the criteria of this recommendation should help to consolidate the “Reserve Fund” described in suggested measure 5.1.
3. It is recommended that the RLC establish a results-monitoring function associated with regional priorities and those of the CPFs. The region is the most appropriate level for this function.
4. It is recommended that FAO maintain a support structure for the Global Resource Management System (GRMS) at RLC and the development of all modules, with a view to helping improve efficiency in regional operations.
5. Given the growing importance of the Field Programme in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the fact that it is increasingly funded by contributions from the region’s own countries, RLC, with the support of TCS, should develop an institutional resource-mobilization strategy that includes assigning specialized officers for the strategy and the close involvement of Country Representatives. An integrated approach to the role of FAO in South-South cooperation should be devised in this context. The mobilization of resources should be included as a strategic sector in CPFs and in the recruitment of Country Representatives and Technical Officers in the region.

Recommendation 7: FAO Senior Management at the Regional Office

It is recommended that Regional Management improve the design and implementation of field projects, as well as the implementing mechanisms to ensure improved management of knowledge and normative products generated by decentralized offices.

Suggested measures:

1. In terms of the specific projects evaluated, it is recommended that the heads of Multidisciplinary Teams and Country Representatives ensure a design guaranteed to have an impact on policy at the local or national level. As far as the pilot project developed as part of Strategic Objective 1 is concerned, it is recommended that RLC carry out an exhaustive evaluation of the design, processes and results before implementing it at the regional level.
2. As for the production and dissemination of normative products, it is recommended that RLC centralizes the material available on a website, informs potential users and includes a counter of searches and downloads to monitor usage. The information strategy should use adverts and summaries that appeal directly to the target audience. The communications strategy should define target populations and diversify the channels used.
3. In order to improve knowledge management, it is recommended that RLC incorporate systematized experiences into the monitoring and evaluation system that has been developed.
4. As far as project-level activities are concerned, Regional Management, Country Representatives and Technical Officers should guarantee the conditions for combining the active participation of women with the responsibilities they bear in everyday life and the social roles they perform. The sustainability of actions for women is linked to combining them with their family roles and the operational division of labour.
5. It is recommended that RLC, with support from LEG, review the potential of technical commissions and defines a strategy to define their future work and role in such intergovernmental forums.

Recommendation 8: FAO Senior Management at Headquarters and at the Regional Office

FAO should immediately produce an action plan for eliminating existing gender inequality, including goals, targets, time frames and resources. There should be a substantial increase in the number of women among Country Representatives, and women should also reach higher salary brackets (given that they have the required skills).