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PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

Hundred and Fifteenth Session

Rome, 26-30 May 2014

Evaluation of FAO's Regional and Subregional Offices for Asia and the Pacific

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

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, document PC 115/3 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.

Queries on the substantive content of this document may be addressed to:

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1. FAO Management welcomes the *Evaluation of FAO's Regional and Subregional Offices for Asia and the Pacific*. It will contribute directly to the ongoing strengthening of FAO's structure and capacity in Asia and the Pacific, and in other regions.
2. Management is not looking at this evaluation in isolation. It is the fourth of five regional evaluations undertaken at the request of FAO's governing bodies. Like the previous three, its value lies not only in its recommendations, but also in the suggestions, findings and analysis that underpin these recommendations. Findings and lessons from this evaluation will be added to those of the other regional evaluations as part of continuing efforts to maximize impacts and results, in particular at the country level.
3. Wide-ranging changes have been implemented across the Organization since early 2012 as part of the ongoing transformation of FAO. The transformational process is a "work-in-progress". As the evaluation points out, in many cases it is still too early to see these changes translated into concrete impacts and results. Nonetheless, this is the largest evaluation to have been undertaken since many of these changes were begun and in this regard, it provides a useful snapshot of the progress that has been made so far and points to a number of areas requiring further reflection, adjustment and change. For example, the evaluation highlights the value of increased involvement of FAO Representatives in strategic planning and priority setting processes. This is an important finding, in particular when added to experiences in other regions. Management believes that these issues will be addressed as part of a broader review exercise that will be undertaken during 2014 to ensure that roles, responsibilities and accountabilities are fully aligned with the changes that have taken place across the Organization since 2012.
4. Similarly, the evaluation highlights the clear benefits of Country Programming Frameworks (CPF), reaffirming the findings of previous evaluations, in particular that of the Africa region. The evaluation also affirms the critical importance of strong FAO's country leadership, a central pillar of the changes that are being put in place to strengthen FAO's country performance. The evaluation welcomes the increasing emphasis being put on South-South Cooperation (SSC) and stresses the importance of building up capacities at the regional and country levels as a basis for extending SSC within the region.
5. The evaluation also focuses on a number of issues not being addressed directly by the ongoing change process, but that nonetheless require further attention. First and foremost is the need to strengthen FAO's capacity and efforts with regard to gender mainstreaming (and social protection) within the region. Management supports this finding and welcomes the analysis and rationale put forward to support the related recommendation. Likewise, issues related to the distribution of administrative and operational support (AOS) linked to the project servicing cost (PSC) are highlighted in this evaluation as they were in previous regional evaluations. While the model underpinning the distribution of AOS is in line with governing bodies' guidance and FAO's work measurement survey (WMS), Management is moving ahead with a comprehensive study of FAO's project support cost policy and methodologies, as requested by the governing bodies. The study will look at ways of simplifying the current cost-recovery framework and making it more effective, based on the guiding principle of full cost recovery. It is anticipated that the study will address the issues highlighted in this evaluation and elsewhere.
6. The evaluation recognises the distinctiveness of the Subregional Office for the Pacific Islands (SAP) and makes a number of suggestions regarding its role, structure and functioning. In particular, it suggests that SAP should be given greater delegated authority and operational autonomy. FAO Members have agreed to strengthening FAO's presence and capacity in the region. For example, in June 2012, the Council endorsed proposals to: (i) establish a Programme Development Officer position in Papua New Guinea; (ii) create national Assistant FAOR posts in Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu; and (iii) and establish a new Marine Resources Management post at the P4 level in SAP. Management will provide all the support required to ensure that these additional resources translate into increased results and impact. In this regard, and building on the evaluation's findings, Management recognizes the need to identify options for further strengthening operational reach and effectiveness in the Pacific.

7. The evaluation makes nine recommendations, covering a broad spectrum of issues and concerns. Several recommendations include sub-recommendations.
8. Management accepts seven of the recommendations and rejects two, specifically:
 - a) Recommendation 8 on reporting lines of the Human Resources Officer in RAP; and
 - b) Recommendation 9 on delegation of authority for the recruitment of international consultants.
9. Both rejected recommendations refer to human resource management issues. Management recognises the need for clear reporting lines. However, Recommendation 8 is rejected as the proposal is not consistent with the reporting line model that is currently in place in the five regional offices. Recommendation 9 is rejected as Management feels that the substance of the recommendation has been superseded by new policy guidelines on the recruitment of non-staff human resources, including international consultants, which were issued at the end of 2013.
10. Further information is provided in the attached Matrix. Management also takes careful note of the many suggestions, findings and analysis linked to each of the evaluation's recommendations.

Matrix - Management response to the Evaluation of FAO's Regional and Subregional Offices for Asia and the Pacific

Evaluation Recommendation	Management response Accepted, partially accepted or rejected and comment on the Recommendation	Management plan			
		Action to be taken	Responsible unit	Timeframe	Further funding required (Y or N)
<i>Priority setting and planning</i>					
<p>Recommendation 1: To FAO, on inclusiveness of the process for the identification of the SF results hierarchy and the CPFs</p> <p>In recognition of the respective lead roles and competences at the different levels of priority setting, the Evaluation recommends that:</p> <p>a) specific mechanisms be established for an active and structured participation of the heads of all FAO Decentralized Offices, including Regional and Subregional offices and Country offices, in the identification and development of Strategic Framework results-based hierarchy; and</p> <p>b) CPF formulation process include a very early step of in-depth consultation between FAOREps, Regional Offices Multi-Disciplinary Teams, representatives of the SOs teams and HQ technical divisions, on the main areas and thrust of work wherein FAO can have a</p>	Accepted	<p>FAO's Corporate Programmes Monitoring Board (CPMB), with the support of OSP, to ensure that lessons learnt from the new corporate planning processes during 2012-2013 for 2014-2015, in particular with regard to the effective involvement of regional, subregional and country offices, inform the next planning cycle for 2016-17.</p>	a) OSP	2014-2015	N
		<p>Ongoing revision of CPF guidelines to incorporate measures to engage Strategic Objective Teams and headquarters technical divisions at an early stage in the CPF formulation process.</p>	b) OSD	2014	N

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		Action to be taken	Responsible unit	Timeframe	Further funding required (Y or N)
comparative advantage in any given country.					
<i>Resources</i>					
<p>Recommendation 2: To FAO, on the current AOS mechanism</p> <p>The Evaluation recommends that the rules and procedures regulating the calculation and distribution of AOS be revised as follows:</p> <p>a) information available on AOS should be harmonized across the different corporate systems;</p> <p>b) the PSC/AOS policy should be better communicated to the COs and a help-desk should be established in HQ to provide assistance on the matter;</p> <p>c) AOS need to be posted/made available to users according to a publicly available time-schedule;</p> <p>d) a mechanism should be established ensuring that financial and in-kind contributions by decentralized offices to the management and implementation of regional and global projects are equitably reimbursed.</p>	Accepted	<p>a) OSP, CIO and OSD will accelerate efforts to harmonize AOS-related information across FAO systems, analyze discrepancies, and propose and implement changes;</p> <p>b) OSD and OSP will work to ensure that AOS modalities are communicated effectively to, and understood by all decentralized offices;</p> <p>c) OSD and OSP will work to ensure that the timings of AOS reimbursements are clear and are communicated effectively to, and understood by all decentralized offices;</p> <p>d) A comprehensive review of the policy regarding project support costs is being undertaken at the request of the Finance Committee (JM 2013.2/3 and FC 151/8 refer). In the meantime, an interim model for the distribution of PSC of emergency projects has been implemented, following the integration of FAO's emergency and development activities.</p>	OSP (with OSD and CIO)	End 2014	N
			OSD/OSP	2014	N
			OSD/OSP	2014	N
			OSP	2015	N

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<p>Recommendation 3: To RAP and SAP, on Resource Mobilization and communication</p> <p>The Evaluation recommends that RAP and SAP become responsible for the following functions:</p> <p>a) supporting and servicing DOs in the Region to develop and implement their Resource Mobilization strategies;</p> <p>b) developing a resource mobilization community of practice within their areas of influence;</p> <p>c) supporting DOs in developing communications plan, providing quality assurance during implementation, including for the production of communications materials for resource mobilization, as well as more general awareness purposes.</p>	Accepted	<p>Regional and subregional offices are responsible for leading resource mobilization efforts in decentralized offices in line with FAO's Resource Mobilisation and Management Strategy (RMMS) and guidelines endorsed by FAO's internal Corporate Programmes Monitoring Board (CPMB) in February 2014. The Donor Liaison and Resource Mobilisation team (TCSR) at headquarters ensures that resource mobilization efforts are coordinated across the Organization, working closely with the Strategic Objective Coordinators and the CPMB. Specific actions include:</p> <p>a) training programme to be delivered within the context of strengthened FAOR training programme, including a specific component on resource mobilization;</p> <p>b) new Resource Mobilisation Officer in RAP to lead development of community of practice;</p> <p>c) RAP and other DOs will develop communication strategy, plans and materials to support resource mobilisation in the region.</p>	<p>RAP/SAP, with support of OCC and TCSR</p> <p>TCSR with CSPL</p> <p>RAP with TCS</p>	<p>mid-2014</p> <p>2014</p> <p>2014</p>	<p>N</p> <p>N</p> <p>N</p>

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<i>Delivery at regional and country level</i>					
<p>Recommendation 4: To FAO and RAP, on technical expertise</p> <p>The Evaluation recommends that FAO and RAP:</p> <p>a) develop a more comprehensive and flexible system to draw upon technical expertise within the Organization and the Region to complement existing RAP capacity, in order to more effectively meet the demand for technical services of its Members;</p> <p>b) monitor attentively the performance of LTOs under the new Project Cycle Guide, through time-recording systems, and allow open feedback and discussion among key players on systemic bottlenecks and possible ways forward;</p> <p>c) ensure that FAO projects and programmes meet quality standards of design and formulation.</p>	Accepted	<p>a) support further definition and implementation of corporate technical networks which bring together headquarters technical departments and decentralized multi-disciplinary teams (PC114/2 Sup.1 refers);</p> <p>b) Management will monitor both LTO performance and the effectiveness of the new project cycle guidelines. It does not believe time-recording systems represent an effective performance monitoring tool;</p> <p>c) support provided by OSD to the roll-out of phase 3 of the Project Cycle to ensure projects meet the required standards of FAO's Quality Assurance Review process.</p>	<p>OSD, in collaboration with DDN</p> <p>OSD in consultation with FPMIS/OSP</p> <p>OSD</p>	<p>2014-15</p> <p>2014</p> <p>2014</p>	<p>N</p> <p>N</p> <p>N</p>

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<p>Recommendation 5: To FAO and RAP, on regional programmes</p> <p>In order to enhance the relevance, effectiveness and impacts of regional programmes, including their relevance and ownership at country level, the Evaluation recommends that:</p> <p>a) FAO technical officers in HQ and RAP always communicate with the concerned country office, at the time of initial planning of any initiative involving the specific country;</p> <p>b) The identification and formulation of regional programmes, both TCPs and extra-budgetary funded, draw on the priorities of work identified by the technical regional commissions; and</p> <p>c) FAOReps be involved in the RAP-led process of identification and selection of regional TCPs and other regional and global projects.</p>	Accepted	a-c):Management reaffirms the actions agreed at the 114 th session of the Programme Committee (November 2013) in relation to Recommendation 1.5 of the Evaluation of FAO's Regional and Subregional Offices for Africa on increasing the responsibility/authority of decentralized offices for regional, subregional and, where relevant, global programmes and projects being implemented in regions, subregions and countries (Management Response to Recommendation 1.5 in PC 114/2 Sup.1 refers).	TC, RAP, technical departments and FAORs	2014	N

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<p>Recommendation 6: To RAP on gender analysis and social protection capacity</p> <p>The Evaluation recommends that RAP take immediate steps to increase gender and rural/social development capacity in RAP by hiring a Gender Expert with strong experience in gender and rural/social development issues in order to support the regional Gender Focal Point network and the country offices, integrate gender analysis and gender equality and rural/social development perspectives in the CPFs at both outcome and output level and in the normative and knowledge products, and fully implement the Gender Equality Policy. In consideration of the likely long delays in filling the post, RAP should also secure expertise on a short term basis.</p>	Accepted	RAP will expedite procedures to fill the vacant Senior Gender Officer post, with someone with strong experience in gender and rural/social development.	RAP, in consultation with ESP	1 quarter 2014	N

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<p>Recommendation 7: To FAO, on further support to GRMS</p> <p>The Evaluation recommends that FAO continues its support to the implementation of GRMS. Necessary actions are as follows:</p> <p>a) There is an urgent need for a robust post-deployment plan including, but not limited to, further training;</p> <p>b) Super-users should be placed within the decentralized network where they can best service the operations being carried out;</p> <p>c) Expanded and informed access to reporting functions within GRMS should be granted to all Decentralized Offices as soon as possible;</p> <p>d) Certain approval hierarchies (e.g. travel, recruitment) should be revisited; and</p> <p>e) Responsibilities for GRMS need to be clarified, in order to ensure the timely and effective execution of transactions in support of operations.</p>	Accepted	<p>a) Regional offices have formulated their plans for the first half of 2014. Longer-term support plans will also be devised through the Programme Executive Board;</p> <p>b) the current configuration of access and super-user responsibilities will be revised in the second half of 2014 once the system is fully stabilised;</p> <p>c) a Field Office reporting dashboard and numerous monitoring reports are available, but need to be fully deployed;</p> <p>d) see b) above;</p> <p>e) see b) above. The overall operating model underlying GRMS needs to be reviewed in light of creating more synergies between administrative, operational and programme functions.</p>	CS	2014-2015	N

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		Action to be taken	Responsible unit	Timeframe	Further funding required (Y or N)
<p>Recommendation 8: To FAO, on reporting lines of the Human Resources Officer</p> <p>To ensure a consistent application of the corporate HR policy, the Evaluation recommends that the position of HR Officer in all Regional Offices be out-posted from OHRD, similarly to what is currently the case for other staff.</p>	<p>Rejected</p> <p><u>Note:</u> The primary reporting line of all HR Officers in Regional Offices is to the Regional Representative. The secondary functional reporting line is the Director, OHR. Management believes that it is important to preserve consistency across the regions.</p>	Management will monitor the situation to ensure a consistent application of corporate HR policy in all regions.			
<p>Recommendation 9: To FAO, on delegation of authority on recruitment of international consultants</p> <p>The Evaluation recommends that further delegation of authority to Budget Holders be given for the recruitment of international consultants where there is sufficient capacity within the respective DO.</p>	<p>Rejected</p> <p><u>Note:</u> New HR Policy guidelines on the recruitment of non-staff human resources (NSHR) were distributed at the end of 2013. These include the recruitment of international consultants. Some additional delegated authority to regional offices is included, but all recruitment continues to be processed by the SSCs. Management believe these new guidelines supersede this Recommendation.</p>	OHR and HR Officers in decentralized offices will ensure that information on the new guidelines regarding the recruitment of NSHR are disseminated to all decentralized offices and understood.			