

Chairs' Aide Mémoire - Second Meetings of CoC-IEE WG I
Tuesday 29 January 2008
Vic Heard, Chair

Review and Monitoring Progress on Deliverables by Management (Quick Wins)

- 1) Members appreciated the management's summary of its deliverables but Members considered that they needed to see these more clearly in relation to the WG I work programme. They requested the management and secretariat to develop a chart or matrix which would summarise what strategies and studies would be available from management and by when in relation to the Group's own work and commitment to deliverables. It was important that such a chart or matrix should also show the interface with the activities of other WGs. The management and CoC-IEE secretariat were requested to produce such a chart for the WG's consideration at its meeting on 19 February.

Preliminary Discussion on priority themes and priority setting

- 2) **IEE proposed criteria for priority setting – themes and programmes** (First Aide mémoire paras 17-19; & 76) IEE paras 1202, 1204 & 1205)
 - a) While not arriving at any final judgements, Members generally concluded that criteria were less useful in deciding themes than they were in considering programmes and that first ideas should be developed and then a few key questions or criteria applied in considering them. It was naturally important that themes must fall within the FAO mandate. There was a strong feeling that Members' needs were the paramount criterion. Themes would not cover all FAO work but would provide a focus. With regard to the other criteria proposed by the IEE, it was considered that:
 - i) the Organization's track record and comparative strengths were important, but on occasions, if a major priority need of Members was failing to be met, then FAO would have to build or re-build its comparative advantage and remedy the problems which had led to previous poor performance;
 - ii) donors of voluntary contributions were Members of FAO and thus their interests were taken into account along with other members. Themes would be focuses for Regular Programme resources but could also provide a communication tool and a means to attract additional extra-budgetary funding. The advantages of pooled or unearmarked funding, rather than funding tied to particular projects, was noted. Extra-budgetary funding should support the Regular Programme, not the other way around; and
 - iii) the concept of potential for partnership needed to be further refined although it was evident that FAO could be more effective when it worked in concert with others.
 - b) Similar considerations applied to the use of criteria in deciding upon programmes, however at this more detailed level there was a case for more rigour and the management should report on the use of such criteria in making its proposal for the Medium-Term Plan and Programme of Work and Budget.
 - c) **Relationship of regional and national priorities to FAO global priorities** (role of Regional Conferences and TCP) (First Aide mémoire paras 22-23; IEE paras 1200 - 1201)

It was clear that FAO's global priorities should reflect the needs of a large proportion of its

Members and there was a strong continuum from national and regional needs to the global response. Thus the IEE recommendations had some merit and a more in-depth analysis from the national and regional perspectives needed to be strengthened in FAO. Further considerations discussed included that:

- i) It was unclear how well National Medium-term Priority Frameworks were developing and to what extent they would in reality provide information which could be fed upwards to provide a composite picture of national needs;
 - ii) Some regions were very heterogeneous and, while there were sub-regional needs, it was more difficult to speak of regional needs. Other regions had a strong communality of needs and in Africa these had been identified in CADEP. At the present time the regional Conferences were not organized in such a way as to facilitate identification of regional needs in a realistic way; and
 - iii) Although regional issues could be important, the focus for FAO technical support should remain the national level.
- d) **IEE Message 5 – FAO’s future relevance and effectiveness** (First Aide mémoire paras 34-37; IEE paras 15 - 18)

Although not discussed as a separate item, FAO’s relevance and effectiveness were prominent issues in discussion of other agenda items. The IEE Message brought out major points. Rural employment generation and incomes were important, so, as the IEE had stated, was increased production, especially of food. However, an important question was how production increases were to be achieved and what should be FAO’s role in this. Some members considered that the IEE had not given sufficient weight to the contribution FAO had to make in transferring improved technology for production. They did not share the IEE’s view that this aspect could be best handled mainly by others and that FAO’s comparative strengths lay more exclusively in working for an enabling environment for production, including an overall knowledge management environment. It was emphasised that FAO also continues to play an important role in such activities as establishing Farmers’ Field Schools. The need to develop farming systems was also stressed.

3) **Identification of Priorities for Themes** (First Aide mémoire para 17; IEE paras 1202 & 1203)

There was a wide ranging discussion of important issues which should be reflected in Themes. It was noted that Themes came above programmes and below the Strategic Framework Goals of Member Countries in the hierarchy of logic in meeting Members’ needs. They should not thus merely repeat the Goals; they should provide a focus within them and balanced support to them. It was also noted that they could address more than one Goal. Similarly they should not be a repeat of Programmes which will contribute to the themes. Over thirty ideas were put forward by Members, many of them related to each other. The Chair took note of these ideas and on the basis of them will make proposals for discussion at the next meeting, bearing in mind that themes should be focused but at a high level of aggregation and that they should be limited in number or they will cease to provide either priorities or focus. They would not describe the totality of FAO’s work but would help focus FAO’s efforts and image and might draw in additional resources.

4) **Further discussion of the Strategic Framework Goals of Members:** The management presented a short paper further exploring the issues. Members requested the management to formulate a draft proposal for discussion at a future meeting in March (as per the schedule). It was noted that the

present wording of the Goals had been carefully negotiated and care would be needed in rewording. Among the further considerations raised were:

- a) The possible role of a preamble to the Goals which could reflect on: the need for effective collective action; the significance of climate change; the importance of development; and the MDGs including the importance of gender considerations and the needs of children (although it was clear that there was a division of labour in the UN system and FAO would not address all MDGs equally);
- b) Whether the concept of access to adequate food in Goal 1 needed some expansion. Some Members also suggested in view of the close link between adequate food and nutrition and poverty that this Goal could be brought closer to MDG 1;
- c) Implications of climate change within the Goals, as well as the preamble;
- d) Better aligning the three goals with the MDG wording;
- e) Further consideration of timing and targets. In this regard it was agreed that the Goals should be forward looking, although the Strategic Framework actions would be aligned with the Medium-Term Plan of six years. In this regard the MDG time horizon of 2015 remained valid but a longer perspective could also be built in.