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Evaluation of FAO's evaluation function

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INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF FAO'S EVALUATION FUNCTION

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Table of Contents

Acronyms	iii
Executive Summary	iv
Chapter 1. Background and methodology	1
Introduction	1
Background and Context	2
The UN context: UNEG and Delivering-as-One.....	3
Purpose and Object of the Evaluation	3
Methodology	4
Chapter 2. Usefulness and Relevance of FAO's Evaluation Function.....	10
Usefulness	10
Relevance of the evaluation function	14
Evaluation planning.....	14
Credibility of the evaluation function.....	16
Quality Assessment of OED Reports	17
Dissemination /Communication	22
The management response process	22
Chapter 3. Appropriateness and effectiveness of FAO evaluation function	26
a) Enabling environment for the evaluation function.....	26
On FAO's Evaluation Charter.....	26
OED budget and staff sufficiency	27
Staff perceptions.....	28
OED staffing.....	31
Definition of roles and responsibilities in OED	31
Capacity building of OED staff.....	31
Peer review and a more participatory process.....	32
b) Independence of the Evaluation Function.....	32
c) OED's Contribution to Learning and Accountability	35
External evaluation team leaders.....	36
Inclusion of Cross cutting Issues in OED evaluations	38
OED's roles and responsibilities for RBM in FAO.....	39
OED's roles and responsibilities for creating an evaluation culture	39
d) Efficiency and synergies within the context of oversight functions	39
Chapter 4: Conclusions and Recommendations	42
Conclusions	42
Recommendations	43
Annexes.....	46
Annex 1: Questionnaires and Surveys.....	46
Annex 2: Mapping of respondents	67
Annex 3: Template for assessing evaluation reports	68
Annex 4: Evaluation matrix	80
Annex 5: Correspondence between findings (chapter 2 and 3), conclusions and recommendations (chapter 4)	87
Annex 6: List of persons interviewed.....	95
Annex 7: Documents reviewed	99
Annex 8: Terms of Reference.....	101
Background papers.....	1
1. FAO's Centralized Evaluation, Decentralized Implementation and Decentralized/Auto-evaluation.....	1
2. FAO's Evaluation Charter and the Evaluation Function at FAO.....	4

List of Figures

Figure 1. Timeline of UNEG actions 2010 to 2015/16	3
Figure 2. Theory of Change of FAO's Evaluation Office*	4
Figure 3. A simplified version of the theory of change.....	5
Figure 4. Evaluation sample	5
Figure 5. Country coverage of sampled evaluations (2014-2015)	7
Figure 6. Evaluation timeline	8
Figure 7. Stakeholder's perceptions on factors affecting the utility of evaluations and the utility of evaluation recommendations from FAO's Evaluation Office.	10
Figure 8. Common issues for enhancing the relevance and usefulness of FAO's evaluation function	16
Figure 9. Quality of OED evaluations by type (2014-2015) and evaluation criteria	18
Figure 10. Quality of FAO evaluation reports by quality criteria	19
Figure 11. Management Response in a sample of evaluations.....	23
Figure 12. Evaluation Follow-Up Reports	23
Figure 13. Comparative analysis of staff's perception on budget and staff sufficiency	29
Figure 14. Budget Estimate and Actual Cost by OED Evaluation Type, 2015-2013 (staff cost excluded); year of finalization of the report.....	30
Figure 15. Behavioural and Organisational Evaluation Independence	34
Figure 16. Relation between years of professional experience and the quality of evaluation reports	37
Figure 17. Comparative analysis of OED junior and senior staff perceptions on cross-cutting issues and effectiveness of OED set up.....	38

Acronyms

ADG	Assistant Director General
DG	Director General
ECD	Evaluation Capacity Development
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FAOR	FAO Representative
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
HQ	Headquarters
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IEE	Independent External Evaluation
IEFE	Independent Evaluation of FAO's Evaluation
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IPA	Immediate Plan of Action
IPPC	International Plant Protection Convention
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
MICS	Middle Income Countries
MOPAN	Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network
MR	Management Response
ODG	Office of the Director General
OED	Office of Evaluation
PC	Programme Committee
QCPR	Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review
RBM	Results-based Management
RP	Regular Programme
RQ	Research Quality Plus framework
TF	Trust Fund
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
USAID	United State Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollar
WFP	World Food Programme

Executive Summary

i. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is mandated by its governing body to conduct an independent evaluation of the evaluation function every six years. This is the first of such evaluations.

ii. The report starts with a presentation of the background and context for this evaluation of FAO's evaluation function. It then proceeds to present the methodology, which combines the use of interviews, surveys and a review of documentation, triangulating different sources of evidence. It continues with a chapter on the relevance and usefulness of FAO evaluations followed by another chapter on the appropriateness and effectiveness of FAO evaluation function. Based on the findings of the previous chapters, the report closes with a set of conclusions and recommendations to strengthen FAO's evaluation function.

iii. *FAO's Office of Evaluation (OED) made significant progress during the last biennium to improve its usefulness but there is scope for improvement both in learning and accountability.* OED has become more aligned with FAO's strategic approach, making progress in systematizing its practice in guidelines, it is implementing a training/learning programme for its staff, and started to implement a communication plan for a better dissemination of its evaluations. OED is also an active participant in the UN Evaluation Group.

iv. On the other hand, there are limitations in the relevance of OED's evaluations and recommendations and the timeliness of its evaluations, which affects the overall utility of FAO's evaluations. OED meets the needs of FAO Member Countries to a higher degree than those of evaluation stakeholders in FAO's Headquarters (FAO HQ) and country offices, of implementation partners and partner governments. The timeliness of OED evaluations is a key factor affecting the relevance of evaluation results, with Member Countries showing higher satisfaction than evaluation stakeholders. Clients of OED evaluations are largely satisfied with OED recommendations while actionable formulations could be further strengthened.

v. Despite mostly sufficient evaluation budgets, the quality of OED evaluations is uneven across the different evaluation types. Shortcomings in the evaluation methodology and the very limited consideration of gender and human rights are of concern. As is the fact that quality of evaluation reports is highest in joint evaluations, in which OED applies a joint evaluation approach rather than its own. The quality of OED evaluations is also affected by an imbalance of a large group of junior staff with insufficient mid-level and senior level staff. Combined with an increasing OED evaluation portfolio and lack of clear roles and responsibilities of OED staff, staff capacities get overstretched.

vi. The use of evaluations for decision making and accountability has room for improvement. Two of the areas that show shortcomings are the insufficient use of quantitative data and ratings in OED evaluations and the lack of comparability and aggregation of evaluation results, unlike what is done by other UN organizations evaluation offices.

vii. The independence of OED is limited, particularly its behavioural independence, whereas its organizational independence is affected by design and due to a set of practices.

viii. *There is a critical gap in FAO's evaluation function: decentralized/auto-evaluation*

FAO has been strongly increasing the decentralization of its operations but the evaluation function is fully centralized. Auto-evaluations that were done in the past have been discontinued. Decentralized evaluations are not conducted. This gap in FAO's evaluation function deprives the Organization of an important source of learning and improvement of its projects and programmes, it limits the coverage of operations that are evaluated and does not enable OED to validate auto/decentralized evaluations, which not only could enhance the quality of these evaluations but it can also lighten the burden of OED, allowing it to expand its data base of evaluations and therefore enhancing its contribution to learning and accountability.

ix. The rationale for OED's work programme is not fully communicated to the Programme Committee (PC). The rotation of PC members and their limited participation in the process of developing OED's work programme has resulted in PC members not being fully informed on the reasons why some evaluations were conducted by OED. This communication gap affected the PC use of evaluations and therefore the contribution that evaluations can make to FAO's and Member Countries learning and accountability.

x. *OED is not empowered to contribute to evaluation capacity development*

The contribution of OED to evaluation capacity development of Member Countries and/or to FAO has been marginal. OED has neither dedicated funds nor a mandate for evaluation capacity development.

xi. *The "Evaluation Charter for OED" has become outdated*

Although the elaboration and approval in 2010 of an evaluation charter for OED was an important step in the development of FAO's evaluation function, it neglects auto-evaluation and decentralized evaluation (the Charter actually is not an evaluation policy for FAO but a charter for OED), it does not make reference to evaluation capacity development and it does not describe and prescribe in an adequate way processes that should be implemented so as to optimize the contribution of FAO's evaluation function to learning and accountability. This affects OED's enabling environment and contributes to OED operating as an "evaluation silo", despite the periodic engagement of the OED Director with senior FAO management for information sharing.

xii. Based on its conclusions, underpinned by the evaluation findings, the report presents six recommendations:

xiii. *Recommendation 1: A strategy and an action plan for enhancing learning and accountability to be implemented by OED by June 2017. Recommendation addressed to OED's Director.*

1. This plan should include i) tackling human resource issues, mainly addressing the imbalance between junior level staff on the one hand and mid and senior level staff on the other hand through hiring more senior staff with sound evaluation expertise, and clarifying OED staff roles and responsibilities in OED (including mentoring) relating them to the respective staff grade; ii) a rating system to be applied in all (or most) evaluations so as to be able to make comparisons across sectors/areas/organizations, and to aggregate results; iii) an annual report that could be an OED flagship presenting evaluation results (not just summaries of evaluations), with ratings for the different types of evaluations and by regions, and with cross-cutting analysis, systemic or transversal

issues and an assessment of the implementation of evaluation recommendations; iv) internal and/or external quality assurance and enhancement of OED evaluations at two stages of the evaluation process: at the stage of presenting data collection tools and at the stage of draft reporting; the external quality assurance could be implemented either through outsourcing or through reciprocal peer reviews with WFP and IFAD's evaluation offices, an option that has the additional benefit of sharing knowledge among the RBA without incrementing costs; v) request to use data collection tools in evaluation's terms of reference that allow for capturing quantitative data from interviews and surveys; vi) evaluation executive summaries not exceeding 4 pages; vii) inclusion of literature reviews in evaluation reports; viii) compliance with UNEG Quality Checklist (which includes specific quality criteria for gender and human rights) for evaluation reports, incorporating them as an annex to the TOR for OED evaluations; ix) elaboration of policy briefs, transversal reports, and just-in-time reports (e.g. prior to development of a new policy) and x) performance indicators and benchmarks for the new OED strategy and action plan.

xiv. *Recommendation 2: To strengthen OED's independence, and therefore enhancing FAO's credibility, a) OED's Director should ensure that OED staff perceive that they are protected from outside influence, b) the independence of OED should be strengthened and adequately protected (eliminating limitations in the travel of OED Director related to the evaluation function, and allowing OED Director to make the final decision to recruit regular budget staff); c) OED's Director should not be the Secretary of the Evaluation Committee and d) OED should not conduct mid-term evaluations*

Whereas recommendation 2a) is to be implemented by OED's Director by June 2017, through communications with OED staff, recommendation 2b) is addressed to the PC, in consultation with the DG, and should be completed by September 2017. Recommendation 2c) is addressed to the Chair of the Evaluation Committee for implementation during the first quarter of 2017, whereas recommendation 2d) is to be implemented by OED's Director by the fourth quarter of 2017 (and it is linked to the following recommendation concerning decentralized/auto-evaluations).

xv. *Recommendation 3: FAO should develop a programme of decentralized evaluations, including mid-term evaluations, through its Regional Offices, funded with a proportion of trust funds for evaluation; this recommendation is addressed to FAO's Management (namely TCD and DDO, in consultation with the Evaluation Committee and the ODG) with the support of OED, and could be implemented by September 2017.*

Through a programme of decentralized evaluations FAO will strengthen the evaluation function, complementing the independent evaluation (for which OED is responsible) with evaluations conducted by regional or country offices, endowed with a budget for this purpose, which could use a proportion of the trust funds for evaluation (the remaining funds to be allocated to OED). The methodology to be employed in conducting decentralized/auto-evaluations should be harmonized with OED's methodology. To support this programme OED could cooperate in developing the approach, enhancing capacities (as indicated in Recommendation 5) and eventually out-posting OED staff once OED has addressed its human resources issues (as per Recommendation 1i), and through internal evaluation capacity building).

xvi. *Recommendation 4: OED should develop its work programme with participation of the PC, and in consultation with the DG. When evaluations are submitted for discussions at PC meetings there should be a clear explanation of the reasons why the evaluation was*

conducted. This recommendation should be implemented by OED during the first semester of 2017.

xvii. *Recommendation 5: OED should include in its work-programme an internal and external evaluation capacity development (ECD) initiative, for which it could mobilize donor funds and establish partnership agreements. To be implemented by OED by September 2017.*

The ECD initiative could be designed and/or implemented jointly with the evaluation offices of the other UN Rome based agencies, organizing joint ECD activities in Member Countries. These activities could also involve staff from FAO's Regional and Country Offices, strengthening their capacities to manage, supervise and/or conduct decentralized/auto-evaluations

xviii. *Recommendation 6: The "Evaluation Charter for OED" should be replaced by an "Evaluation Policy" for FAO. To be implemented during the first semester of 2017 by a task force, supported by OED and in consultation with the Office of the DG, , the Legal Office, and (for aspects related with decentralized/auto-evaluation) TCD, DDO and the Evaluation Committee.*

xix. These recommendations would enhance the contribution of FAO's evaluation function to the quality of FAO's work, and its support to learning and accountability of the Organization.

Chapter 1. Background and methodology

Introduction

2. FAO is mandated by its governing body to conduct an independent evaluation of the evaluation function every six years. The Independent External Evaluation of FAO completed in 2007 led to a process of reform embedded in the Immediate Plan of Action (IPA), which included a strengthened role for evaluation in FAO. In January 2010 the Evaluation Service was separated from the then Office of Programme, Budget and Evaluation to become the Office of Evaluation (OED) “reporting to the Director-General and to Council through the Programme Committee”. The Charter for the FAO Office of Evaluation, providing the policy framework for the evaluation function in FAO, was approved by the Council in May 2010 and reflected in the Basic Texts of the Organization.

3. The Charter makes provisions for “quality assurance and continued strengthening of the evaluation function”, through three actions: strengthening of existing peer review of major reports; biennial review by a small group of independent peers for conformity of work to evaluation best practice and standards; and an independent evaluation of the evaluation function every six years. This report corresponds to the first of these independent evaluations, and it is planned to be completed by September 2016. Although it has been supported and task managed by FAO Evaluation Office, to ensure independence, a panel of experts has been established to advise the governing body and the evaluation team, and to exercise quality assurance.

4. The evaluation team composed by two evaluation experts was selected by the FAO Programme Committee from a short-list compiled by OED. In order to identify potential candidates for the evaluation team and the expert panel, OED conducted a recruitment process during October and December 2015. This involved searching consultant rosters, and advertising in the FAO website and professional networks.

5. To ensure independence, an *Expert Panel* has been established to advise the governing body and the evaluation team. The panel is composed of evaluation experts with evaluation experience in the UN system as well as those who could bring in the perspectives of stakeholders. After a thorough search of candidates, the three panel members were endorsed by Management and the Governing Bodies. The Panel advised the team on the design of the evaluation and conducted a quality check of the draft report, providing detailed comments and suggestions that were addressed by the evaluation team in the preparation of this revised version of the draft report.

6. A preliminary version of the inception report was shared by mid-March with the evaluation’s Expert Panel, whose advice was taken into account in finalizing the inception report. The revised inception report was shared with the Programme Committee, the Office of the Director General (ODG), and OED.

7. The report starts with a presentation of the background and context for this evaluation of FAO’s evaluation, making reference to the Independent External Evaluation (IEE), the IPA, FAO’s Evaluation Charter, the 2012 UN Peer Review and the corresponding FAO’s Management Response (MR), other evaluations of the evaluation function at FAO and some references to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) whose guidelines were used in this evaluation. It then proceeds to present the methodology used for the evaluation. It continues with a chapter on the relevance and

usefulness of FAO evaluations followed by another chapter on the appropriateness and effectiveness of FAO evaluation function. Based on the findings of the previous chapters, the report concludes with a set of conclusions and recommendations to strengthen FAO's evaluation function.

Background and Context

8. As indicated in the Introduction, one of the three actions through which the Charter makes provisions for “quality assurance and continued strengthening of the evaluation function”, is an independent evaluation of the evaluation function every six years. There have been other evaluations or reviews of FAOs evaluation function, and this section will make reference to them particularly in terms of lessons learned for evaluations of FAO's evaluation function.

9. The 2012 Evaluation Peer Review of the evaluation function of FAO was conducted in line with UNEG's Framework for Professional Reviews of the Evaluation Function of UN Organizations. Although it has been an important contribution to the understanding and assessment of the evaluation function, FAO's Management raised four issues¹ that this independent external evaluation will try to deal with: the Peer Review engaged in a limited consultation with Member States, its focus was restricted to OED, there was a lack of consideration of evaluation in the context of other oversight functions and of the results based management approach followed by FAO. These are four aspects that the 2016 independent evaluation will take into account.

10. The 2014 Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) assessment includes valuable information on the evaluation function at FAO, benchmarking it with other UN institutions. However, it should be noted that like the 2012 Peer Review it reduced the evaluation function at FAO to OED, neglecting any other FAO evaluation activity conducted outside OED (such as decentralized and/or auto-evaluations)².

11. Although currently the evaluation function at FAO is exercised by OED, the issue of decentralized/ auto-evaluation, and the actual and potential role of OED in relation with this type of evaluations, is one of the themes discussed in this report. In fact, the 2014 JIU study of the evaluation function in the United Nation system, including FAO, and the corresponding management response, highlighted the importance of decentralized evaluation in UN agencies (see background paper # 1).

¹ In its “Management Observations” to the Peer Review
<http://www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/026/me381eSup1.pdf>
and in the interviews with the 2016 Independent Evaluation Team

² http://www.mopanonline.org/Assessments/FAO2014/FAO-2014-Technical_Report_Vol1-eng.pdf

The UN context: UNEG and Delivering-as-One

12. Since 2010, the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) has been active in producing a wide range of new guidance documents that are important for evaluation practitioners in the UN. Those guidance documents include Follow up to evaluations (2010), Human rights and gender equality (2011, 2014), United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) evaluations (2011), Strengthening national evaluation systems (2012), Impact evaluation (2013), Normative work (2014) and Joint evaluations (2015, see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Timeline of UNEG actions 2010 to 2015/16



Source: <http://www.uneval.org/document/guidance-documents>

13. In 2013 (UNEG) embarked on a revision process of its foundation documents, the UNEG Norms³ and UNEG Standards⁴⁵, due to changes in the evaluation landscape in the United Nations (UN) system since 2005. This process continued in 2015 with consultation of UNEG sub-working group on the revision of Norms and Standards to inform a comprehensive survey targeting the entire UNEG membership⁶. Consultation workshops in Geneva, New York and Rome throughout 2015 captured feedback on the survey results and the way forward and resulted in a consultation report⁷. In September 2015 and February 2016, a drafting group of UNEG heads prepared a revised version of a combined document titled “UNEG Norms and Standards”, which was approved by the Annual General Meeting of UNEG in April 2016. In parallel, the UNEG task force on professionalization is developing a competency framework for evaluators.

14. The *Delivering as One* approach is also influencing the UN evaluation context. The independent evaluation of lessons learned from Delivering as One is specific in terms of decentralized decision making and accountability. The limitations of the resident coordinators’ oversight and line authority for overall transparency and accountability for activities under Delivering as One calls for the modification of the accountability framework⁸.

Purpose and Object of the Evaluation

15. The purpose of this evaluation is to assess, after five years since the Charter was approved, the contribution of the evaluation function to the achievement of FAO goals at the global, regional and national levels, with a forward-looking view to making strategic and policy suggestions for its contribution within a framework of accountability and oversight for the Organization.

³ UNEG, 2005: Norms for Evaluation in the UN System

⁴ UNEG, 2005: Standards for Evaluation in the UN System

⁵ UNEG, 2013: Revision of the Norms and Standards by Estelle Raimondo and Osvaldo Feinstein

⁶ 78 of 312 UNEG members responded to the survey in 2015, including 35% of UNEG heads.

⁷ UNEG, 2015: Revision of Norms and Standards – consultation results by Achim Engelhardt

⁸ *Independent evaluation of lessons learned from Delivering as One*, 2012, lesson 18

16. The object of the evaluation is the evaluation function in FAO and OED evaluations as they are currently carried out.

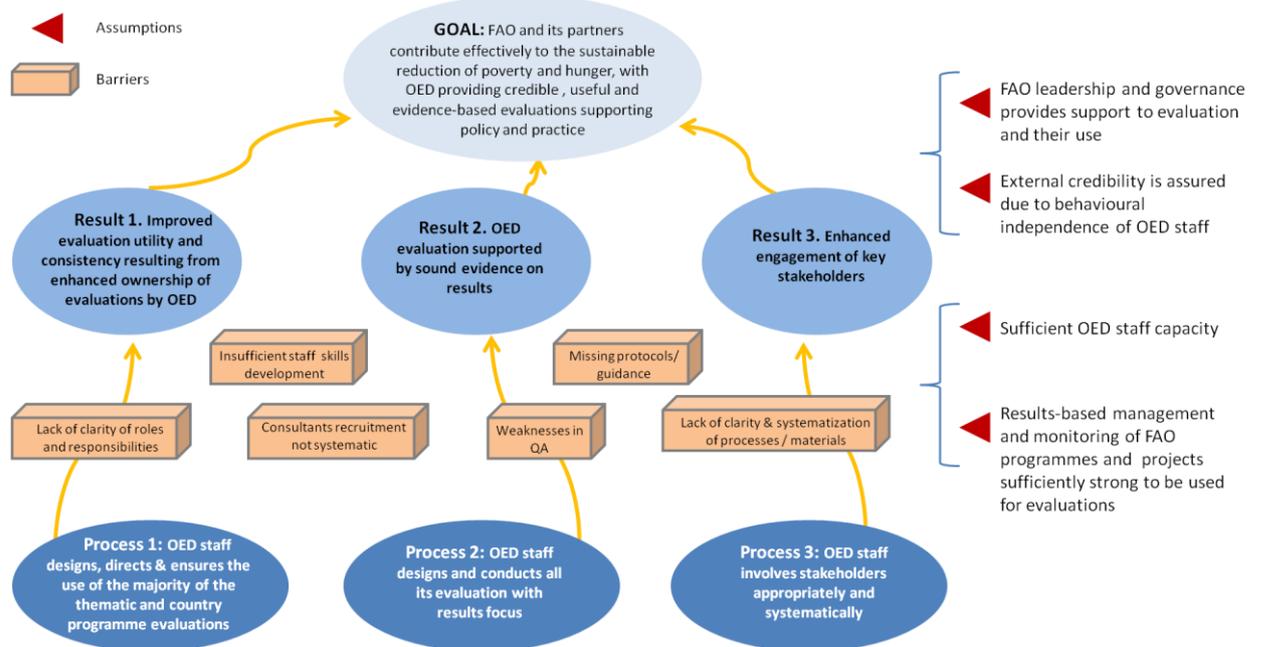
17. The following paragraphs of this section show how the team of the Independent Evaluation of FAO's Evaluation (IEFE) function conducted the evaluation to achieve its purpose.

Methodology

18. The key evaluation questions and sub-questions, as well as the data collection tools and instruments, are presented in this section through an evaluation matrix. A detailed evaluation matrix, with further disaggregation, is in Annex 4, whereas Annex 1 includes the questionnaires and surveys derived from the evaluation matrix.

19. Underlying the evaluation matrix there is a theory of change, which is presented in the following diagram:

Figure 2. Theory of Change of FAO's Evaluation Office*



*Based on OED's Reform Agenda 2014-2015

20. A simpler version of the theory of change, that captures its essence, can be expressed as a linear sequence:

Figure 3. A simplified version of the theory of change

Evaluations → Learning & Accountability → FAO's effectiveness

21. Evaluations are expected to contribute to learning and accountability, thus enhancing FAO's effectiveness. But in order for evaluations to play this role, a set of processes should be in place and the results of these processes (i.e., the evaluations), should comply with a number of characteristics. The evaluation matrix shows the sets of questions and instruments through which these issues are approached in this evaluation.

22. *Participatory Approach:* The evaluation has been conducted using a participatory approach, promoting the inclusiveness of key stakeholders in the evaluation process. This has been done from the Inception Phase onwards, through consultations with the PC, the ODG, the Internal Evaluation Committee, OED management and staff, and other internal and external stakeholders, including Member Country representatives from all regions.

23. *Data collection and analysis:* The evaluation team conducted its data collection activities and analysis according to the design presented in the inception report. The instruments used are included as annexes.

24. *Evaluation sample:* In accordance with the ToR for this evaluation, "the subject of evaluation (the evaluand) is the evaluation function in FAO as it is currently set up (i.e. at the time of the evaluation) and OED evaluations as they are currently carried out"⁹. Accordingly, this evaluation focused on evaluation reports published in 2014 and 2015¹⁰, during the implementation of the Reform Agenda.

25. The proposed sample sizes for OED's evaluation by evaluation type are summarized in the table below (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Evaluation sample

Evaluation type	Number of evaluation reports 2014 and 2015	Sample size
Country evaluations	2	2 (100%)
Thematic evaluations	10	10 (100%)
Resilience evaluations	1	1 (100%)
Project evaluations	30	8(27%)
Joint evaluations	1	1 (100%)
TOTAL	44	21 (48%)

⁹ FAO, 2015: Programme Committee, Hundred and Seventeenth Session, Rome 9-13 March 2015: Terms of Reference for the independent evaluation of the evaluation function.

¹⁰ At the time of preparing this evaluation report, no evaluation had been published in 2016.

26. To select a sample for the project evaluations, the following sampling options were considered by the evaluation team:

- Option A: Random sampling
- Option B: Sampling is applied using a USD 4.79m USD¹¹ budget threshold
- Option C: Stratification by year is included and random sampling is used for 3 evaluations per year to ensure a balance over the period under review.
- Option D: Geographic stratification and random sampling, for 2 evaluations in Africa, 2 Global/Interregional, and 1 for the other regions to ensure geographic coverage¹².

27. The evaluation team decided that option D is the most appropriate, and the Evaluation Panel agreed with this decision although it suggested to increase the number of evaluations, including one additional evaluation for the Arab States, one more for Asia and Pacific, and one more for Latin America and the Caribbean. It should be noted that the use of random sampling minimizes bias.

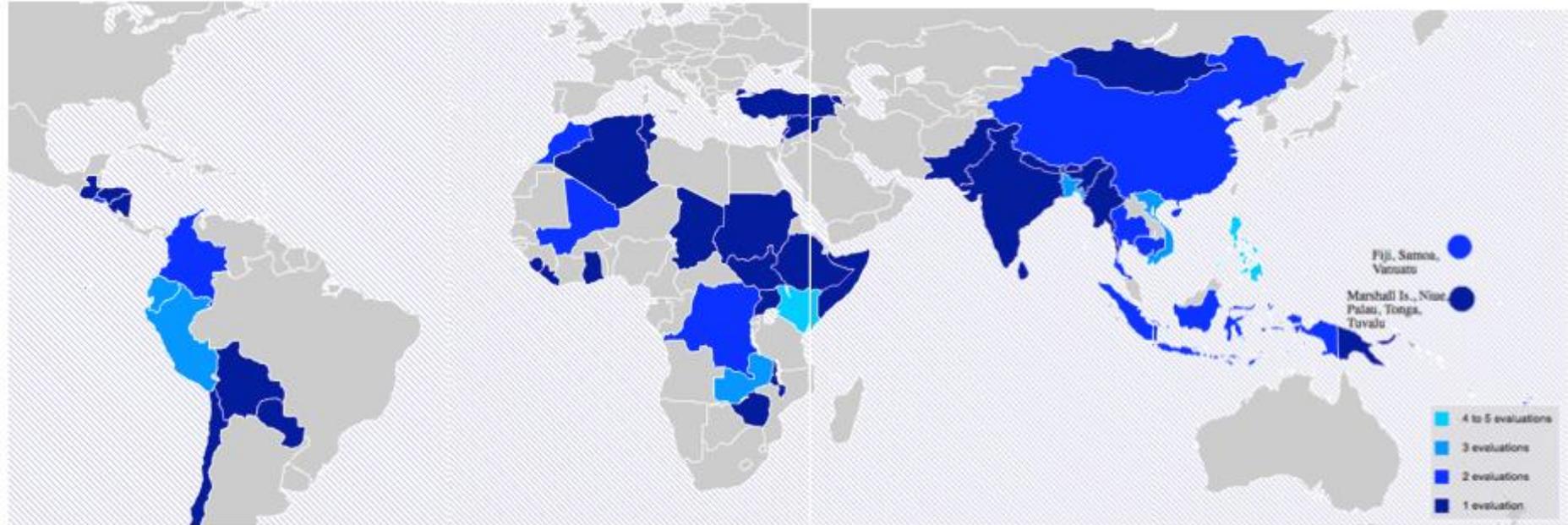
28. Four surveys were used as part of the data collection to supplement interviews and a review of documentation. Out of the 21 sampled evaluations, all 19 external evaluation team leaders were contacted, with a response rate of 74% (14). Out of the 8 OED senior staff, 6 staff responded to a survey, with a response rate of 75%. For the 21 evaluations sampled, a total of 243 evaluation stakeholders were contacted¹³, with 57 responses, a response rate of 23%. For FAO Member Countries the response rate was 12% (23 out of 194) Despite the (expected) low rate of response, particularly in the case of FAO Member Countries, the evaluation team considered that it was important to provide them with an opportunity to express their views about the evaluation function. It is important to note that the surveys were complemented with a review of documentation and with interviews (in the case of Member Countries, all Programme Committee members were invited for interviews; 8 interviews took place and 2 additional PC members provided written answers to a questionnaire).

¹¹ The median of project budgets for the selected period 2014-2015

¹² Geographic distribution of project evaluations: Africa (10), Asia and the Pacific (3), Latin America and the Caribbean (2), Near East and North Africa (3) & Global/Interregional (12)

¹³ The evaluators selected for each of the 21 sampled evaluations a list of 15 evaluation stakeholders based on a stratified random sampling of evaluation stakeholders. The categories used for the stratification were the based on the organisation type. Once stakeholders were identified, contact details were searched on the Internet and complemented by OED. For 71 sampled evaluation stakeholders, no electronic contact details were traceable, leading to a reduction of the sample from 315 to 243.

Figure 5. Country coverage of sampled evaluations (2014-2015)



Source: IEFÉ, 2016

29. For all 21 evaluation reports a meta-evaluation was undertaken using a template based on UNEG's 2010 Quality Checklist for Evaluation Reports¹⁴, complemented with a module from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) 2016 RQ+ Methodology¹⁵. Using this template the IEFE assessed the quality of OED's evaluation reports.

30. The meta-evaluation has been complemented with data collection from key evaluation stakeholders of each sampled evaluation, such as government representatives (from the Ministry of Agriculture), FAO country (and eventually regional) representatives/deputy, and civil society representatives. In addition, external evaluation consultants (team leaders) involved in the sampled evaluations were contacted. Data collection was undertaken partly through surveys and partly through 78 interviews (Annex 2 provides a mapping of respondents and Annex 7 the list of persons interviewed).

31. The **timeline** proposed in the inception report has been followed strictly and is presented in Figure 6.¹⁶

Figure 6. Evaluation timeline

Stage	Period
Inception report	Mid-February - March 2016
Data collection and analysis	April-June 2016
Drafting	May-Mid July 2016
Delivery of first draft to the Expert Panel	Mid-July 2016
Quality control by Expert Panel	2 nd half of July 2016
Delivery of revised draft for circulation	Mid-August 2016
Stakeholder workshop	Week of September 19 th , 2016
Finalization of the report	End September 2016
Presentation of report to the Programme Committee	November 2016

32. During the first week of the evaluation (February 22-26), the team held meetings at FAO HQ with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Programme Committee, the Office of the Director General, the Chair of FAO's Internal Evaluation Committee, OED management and staff, as well as a set of other internal stakeholders.

33. These meetings, conducted as semi-structured interviews (the guides for the interviews are in Annex 1) allowed the evaluation team to identify a set of issues related

¹⁴ <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/607>

¹⁵ Research Quality Plus Framework ; <http://www.idrc.ca/EN/Documents/Research-Quality-Plus-A-Holistic-Approach-to-Evaluating-Research.pdf>

¹⁶ It should be noted that whereas in the TOR timetable the Inception Phase was supposed to start in September 2015 and Data Collection and analysis in November 2015, the date for presentation of the report to the PC remains the same

to the evaluation function at FAO. The evaluation proceeded with the elaboration of a set of questionnaires for an online survey and with additional interviews conducted at FAO HQ and by Skype. Another important activity carried out during the evaluation was a review of documentation. The different sources of information were triangulated to ensure the reliability of the findings.

34. ***Limitations of the evaluation:*** i) the evaluation team so far could not meet with the Director General of FAO (requests for that interview were made to the ODG since the third week of February until the first week of July); ii) the low rate of response to the survey from Member Countries (however, it should be mentioned that the evaluation team was able to meet with 8 of the 13 Programme Committee members that represent Member Countries, and from 2 additional PC members answers to a questionnaire were received, so 10 out of the 13 PC members were contacted, whereas 3 meetings were held with the PC Chair) and iii) neither field visits nor interviews to field staff were undertaken, given that it was not feasible (nor cost-effective) to do this within the time and budget constraint for this evaluation (however 4 of the 5 Regional Representatives were interviewed and sampled field staff invited to participate in a survey).

Chapter 2. Usefulness and Relevance of FAO's Evaluation Function

35. The worth of the evaluation function in an organization to a great extent depends on its usefulness, which is influenced by several factors, one of which is its relevance. This chapter will be focused on the usefulness of FAO's evaluation function and the factors that influence it. In addition to relevance, attention will also be paid to timeliness, dissemination, evaluation practices and participation. The sources of evidence, as indicated in the preceding chapter, are surveys undertaken for this evaluation, interviews and a review of documentation.

Usefulness

Use by FAO Management

36. Findings of evaluations are used by FAO Management in policy formulation and/or revision of existing policy. For example, the Evaluation of FAO's Role and Work Related to Water reviewed by the Programme Committee led to the establishment of FAO Water Platform. Similarly, the review of the Strategic Evaluation of FAO's Role and Work in Nutrition by the Programme Committee led to a new "Strategy and Vision for FAO's Work in Nutrition". The Climate Change Evaluation showed the importance of developing a climate change strategy, which FAO started to develop after the evaluation; another example is the Crop Production Evaluation, which provided FAO management with a wider view of the field, and of areas in which FAO could intervene, something FAO management applied when opportunities appeared for proceeding in that way (e.g. biotechnology forum)¹⁷.

Use by FAO Member Countries

37. The FAO Member Countries participating in the survey use FAO evaluations for three major purposes: i) to know more about a project/programme; ii) for improvements of practices; iii) to inform decision making. Specific examples provided were value for money, project results, and governance issues in FAO.

Meeting clients needs

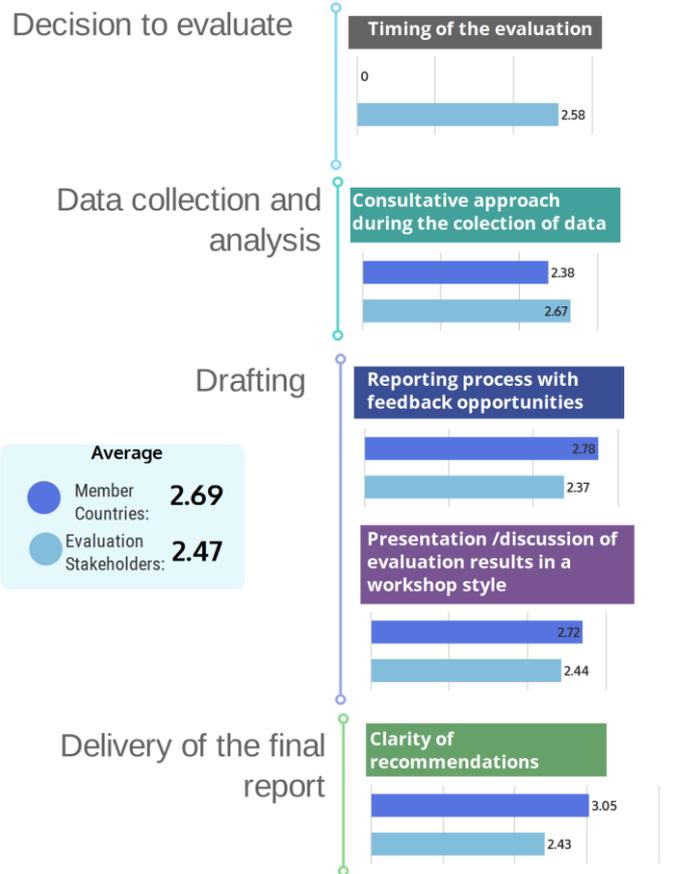
38. OED evaluations largely meet clients needs, according to OED junior staff (medium to high rating, 2.75 out of 4). Evaluation stakeholders are more critical and provide a medium rating (2.39 out of 4) and see the utility of OED evaluations as medium (2.47 out of 4). For FAO Member Countries the utility of FAO's evaluations is in average medium (2.16 out of 4). FAO evaluations respond to the needs of its Member Countries to a medium to high extent (2.55 out of 4). The surveys provides information on the factors affecting the utility of OED evaluations, as perceived by evaluation stakeholders and shown in the Figure 7 below.

Figure 7. Stakeholder's perceptions on factors affecting the utility of evaluations and the utility of evaluation recommendations from FAO's Evaluation Office.

¹⁷ The source of the information included in this paragraph are interviews triangulated with a review of the documentation.

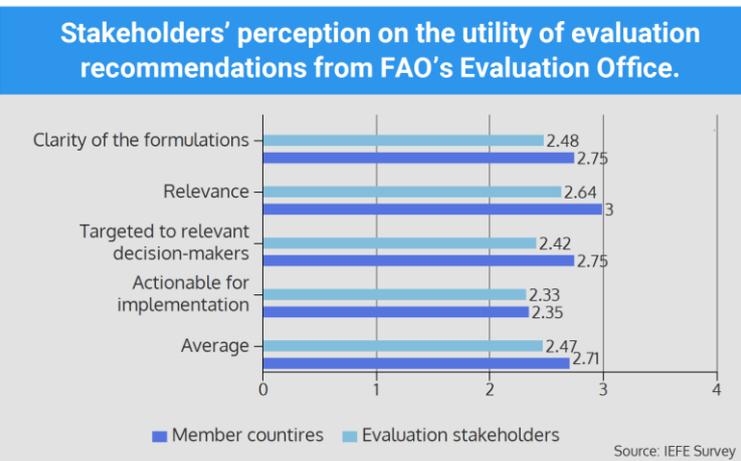
UTILITY OF EVALUATIONS

Stakeholder's perceptions on factors affecting the utility of evaluations



Average

- Member Countries: **2.69**
- Evaluation Stakeholders: **2.47**



39. The 55 stakeholders of the 21 OED evaluations sampled appreciated the consultative process during data collection (55% high to very high ratings), followed by

the timing of the evaluation and the transparency of the evaluation process, all with medium to high ratings in average. Below the average for the sub criteria affecting the utility of OED evaluations are the presentation and discussion of evaluations, the clarity of recommendations and the reporting process with feedback opportunities, resulting in medium ratings. The overall level of ownership of OED evaluations is medium, with stakeholders being split: 42% are satisfied or very satisfied while 23% of stakeholders provided low to very low ratings.

40. FAO Member Countries largely coincide with the views of evaluation stakeholders but survey results show different nuances. For FAO Member Countries, needs are highly met by the clarity of OED recommendations (3.05 out of 4). The transparency of the evaluation process and feedback opportunities in the evaluation process are rated as medium to high (2.78 out of 4). The consultative approach during data collection is medium and below the average (2.38 out of 4).

Timeliness of evaluations to inform decision making

41. Timeliness of evaluation depends on the evaluation type. For country programme evaluations, planning with the country offices including the synchronization with country programming framework, the countries' policy cycle and the cycle of FAO Representatives (FAORs) ensure timeliness. However, for project evaluations, OED reacts to ad-hoc demands from project teams for evaluation services. This limits the timeliness of project evaluations. Using editors enhanced the quality of reports but affected their timely delivery.

42. Evaluation stakeholders rate the timeliness of OED evaluations to inform decision making in average as medium (2.43 out of 4). However, this assessment was not homogeneous, as 11% of evaluation stakeholders rated the timelines of OED evaluations as low to very low. FAO Member Countries are more appreciative about the timeliness of OED evaluations, providing a medium to high rating (2.81 out of 4).

43. Reasons for satisfaction with timeliness were:

- the timely assessment of impacts or results
- evaluations became available in time for deciding on the extension of the programme/project or to develop a new strategy
- evaluations conducted at strategic stages of the intervention
- evaluations facilitated change (e.g. reordering the intervention objectives).

44. Stakeholders listed the following reasons for dissatisfaction:

- the evaluation was done at a too early stage or, in contrast, too late so the results were only available in the last minute to extend the project,
- delays in some of the phases of the evaluation process (e.g. to get the results or too time consuming process to agree on the ToRs),
- lack of timely interaction with concerned parties.

45. Senior OED staff identify the timeliness of evaluations as a critical issue. Realistic evaluation planning was indicated as important to ensure the timeliness of evaluations, whereas the SO evaluations were mentioned as an example where the timeframe has been less realistic. Nevertheless, even with appropriate evaluation planning delays are often considered to be beyond OED's control. This is the case with late requests for project evaluations. Other cases beyond OED's control are related to unplanned changes of the

FAO Representative or changes in government, both affecting OED's operation environment.

46. For project evaluations, mid-term evaluations are perceived as more real time and useful (although the involvement of an independent evaluation office in conducting mid-term evaluations is problematic, and this will be considered in section 3 of this report). End of project evaluations are considered very timely when they were feeding the design of upcoming thematic or country programme evaluations.

47. The general perception of senior technical staff is that OED evaluations are timely. This is especially true for real time evaluations due to the flexibility showed by the OED to accommodate their timing. Another example of timeliness that contributed to usefulness is the case of evaluations that could be used to inform a second phase. However, in one case it was pointed out that an evaluation was not timely and it was mentioned that timeliness could be improved through more consultation. As observed by a FAO Director, FAO operates in a dynamic context with several new initiatives by the DG, so if reports take long time to be produced they become obsolete, making reference to what no longer is FAO's practice, and therefore the usefulness may be negligible.

Usefulness of OED Recommendations

48. OED senior staff is divided over the value of keeping evaluation recommendations rather broad, as the utility of evaluations might be affected as a result. On the one hand, OED responded to feedback from senior management about recommendations being too prescriptive and OED getting into micro- management. Making recommendations less specific is seen as a means to improve their utility. On the other hand, evaluators in some cases considered that they are able to target recommendations in a specific way. There are two risks: if OED recommendations are not sufficiently specific, they can be considered as adding little value, as it was mentioned in some interviews; the second risk is that if recommendations are very specific, OED may be perceived as attempting to micro-manage. Chapter 4 will address these risks.

49. Evaluation stakeholders and FAO Member Countries also commented on the utility of evaluation recommendations. While evaluation stakeholders provided a medium rating (2.47 out of 4), FAO Member Countries were more positive in providing a medium to high rating (2.71 out of 4). Figure 7 also shows the average ratings for all the factors analyzed. The relevance of recommendations was best rated with a medium to high rating from evaluation stakeholders and a high rating from FAO Member Countries. One stakeholder commented in this regard that "The evaluation was of high relevance for the extension of project implementation". Evaluation stakeholders perceive the clarity of formulation and the targeting at decision-makers as medium, as in the case of how actionable recommendations are to be readily implemented.

50. Some stakeholders argued that recommendations need adaptation or reorientation at country programmes/projects level given the limited number of staff, or that the evaluation process should be enhanced to involve all concerned sectors and to allow for a better use of recommendations. In fact, the formulations of recommendations seem less actionable for implementation, as perceived by both, the evaluation stakeholders and FAO Member Countries.

51. Senior technical staff consider that evaluations in which they were involved were useful because those evaluations triggered changes or reforms based on their results. OED evaluations were perceived as an opportunity to improve operations and for reflection and reconsideration of policies. OED evaluations supported in some cases mainstreaming

recommendations in policies and were used for decision making. Less positive experiences refer to

- deficiencies on the recommendations (becoming obsolete due to changes in in FAO's organizational scheme or recommendations neither feasible nor appropriate);
- deficiencies on the report (in terms of facts, difficult to read due to lack of clarity);
- comments were not taken into account in the report;
- conflict of interest
- limited discussion at the higher senior management level.

52. Among senior technical staff, 4 out of 5 indicated that the selection of evaluations and targeting its recommendations facilitates the utility of OED evaluations to a greater extent. In one case, it is explained because targeting recommendations to the senior technical staff's department facilitates the follow-up or because it is considered comprehensive and actionable. For other two senior technical staff it is important that recommendations consider alignment of recommendations with the strategic framework, avoiding recommendations that are either too general or too specific and the need to pay more attention at the conditions for the feasibility of implementation of the recommendations.

Relevance of the evaluation function

53. The inclusion in OED's workprogram of evaluations of the strategic objectives which are at the core of FAO's strategic approach is a way through which the relevance of the evaluation function has been enhanced, despite the fact there has been some concern expressed in the interviews on the extent to which the timeframe for these evaluations are realistic. Nevertheless, their initial phase, focusing on evaluability, also contributes to the development of a better results based management system for the organization.

54. OED's new strategy is well aligned with FAO's strategic approach. However, the evaluation function presents an important disconnect with FAO's move towards a highly decentralized model. The lack of decentralized/auto-evaluations is an important gap that affects the relevance of the evaluation function. It has also led OED to become involved in mid-term and project evaluations which are not at the core of what the independent evaluation office should be doing. Another important dimension of OED's new strategy is its approach to communications (see para. 85), which will contribute to the relevance and usefulness of OED's work.

55. There are two aspects which are crucial in terms of the relevance of the evaluation function: its contribution to learning and accountability, and the consultative process during the evaluation planning. These are the topics of the following subsections.

Evaluation planning

56. One issue that was flagged by the Programme Committee (PC) to the IEFE team is that the selection of topics for evaluation was unclear. Given the key role of the PC vis-à-vis OED, this is an important issue. In this respect, it is worthwhile to mention that the Evaluation Charter includes /expected/ usefulness as a "primary principle underpinning

evaluation in FAO". It states that "Usefulness should always be a prime consideration for selection of a topic for evaluation. Evaluations will be most useful when addressing key areas of concern for the governing bodies and/or FAO management, especially when there are perceived to be problems, priorities are changing or if there are new opportunities. Evaluation should be timed to fit into the management decision-making process". Currently there is a communication gap between OED and the PC concerning the rationale for OED's evaluations.

57. Every two years, the PC reviews and makes final decisions regarding the three-year rolling work plan of evaluation, based on the proposal by OED Director. The current plan covering 2015-17, updated in 2015, was endorsed in November 2014 (almost a year before the appointment of the current PC Chair and the current PC Vice-Chair). The rotation of PC members affects their involvement in the biannual evaluation planning process. The net rolling plan for 2017-19 will be discussed in November 2016. The plan proposes several types of evaluations. The PC is expected to provide specific guidance on strategic or thematic evaluations submitted to it while giving more general guidance on country, project and other evaluations.

58. In building up the plan and making specific decisions as regards the selection of country evaluations, OED has been conducting a very broad series of consultations at country (FAOR), regional (Regional Assistant Director General - ADGs) and global (internal Evaluation Committee) levels to ensure that the plans take well into account the views of all key stakeholders.

59. There are cases in which the rationale for OED's intervention is not indicated or not sufficiently solid, as it should be, given the opportunity cost for the Office involvement in them. For example, the IPPC¹⁸ Evaluation has been an evaluation of its Secretariat, aimed at identifying how to strengthen its performance in view of the emerging challenges, including the enhanced focus on the implementation of the Convention itself. OED was asked to support this evaluation, which was indeed a management consulting task. Whereas it is evident that an OED evaluation of the IPPC Convention could be justified, an OED management consultancy for the IPPC Secretariat is a task which does not correspond to an independent evaluation office.

60. For project evaluations, OED downloads the project list from FAO's field programme monitoring system and contacts budget holder. The lack of decentralized or auto-evaluations does not allow OED to select project evaluations on the basis of validations of decentralized/auto-evaluations; furthermore, the very reduced number of project evaluations (independent or auto-evaluations) is an important limitation faced by OED's evaluations. For example, the Colombia country evaluation pointed out that there were only 3 project evaluations for the 83 implemented projects during the period of the evaluation. The planning of project evaluations does not use the "building block" principle, i.e., decisions on which project evaluations to undertake are not based on the non-project evaluations planned by OED.

61. For 2016/17 a comprehensive evaluation plan is aligned with the strategic plan of FAO.

Implicit diagnosis of issues related to relevance and usefulness of FAO's evaluation function

62. Figure 8 summarizes common areas identified to enhance the relevance and usefulness of FAO evaluations, based on the views of evaluation stakeholders, external

¹⁸ International Plant Protection Convention

evaluation team leaders and OED senior staff. They can be taken as an implicit diagnosis of where the problems are. These areas will be reconsidered in section 4, on conclusions and recommendations.

Figure 8. Common issues for enhancing the relevance and usefulness of FAO's evaluation function

Common issues for enhancing the relevance and usefulness of FAO's evaluation function	Evaluation stakeholders	External team leaders	OED senior staff
Communication			
Enhance the synthesis and packaging of of evaluative evidence		x	x
Improve communications/interaction among participants in the evaluation, including on purpose of evaluation; openness to listen to stakeholder concerns	X	x	
Independence			
Increase independence from FAO senior management	X	x	
Skills enhancement			
Select independent and technically well informed evaluation consultants		x	
Enhance OED staff skills (e.g. to facilitate processes, creating partnerships and improve communication would be key to drive even more inclusive evaluation processes)	X		x
Knowledge sharing and dissemination			
Improve dissemination of the reports/ knowledge sharing about the results of the evaluation (e.g. through the website and by providing appropriate summaries).	X	x	
Decentralisation of evaluation			
Build up evaluation capacity at decentralized level and develop evaluation capacity initiatives at different levels of operation	X	x	x
Evaluation follow-up			
Establish a more clear reporting system on the implementation of the evaluation recommendations, including a responsibility tracking system	X	x	

Credibility of the evaluation function

63. The credibility of the evaluation function depends on its independence (which will be addressed in Chapter 3) and on the quality of the evaluative work. This is also a factor that influences the usefulness of evaluations. The IEFÉ carried out a quality assessment of a sample of OED reports, following UNEG's criteria and including a specific module corresponding to the use of evaluations (these criteria, expanded with the module "positioning for use" are presented in Annex 3).

Quality Assessment of OED Reports

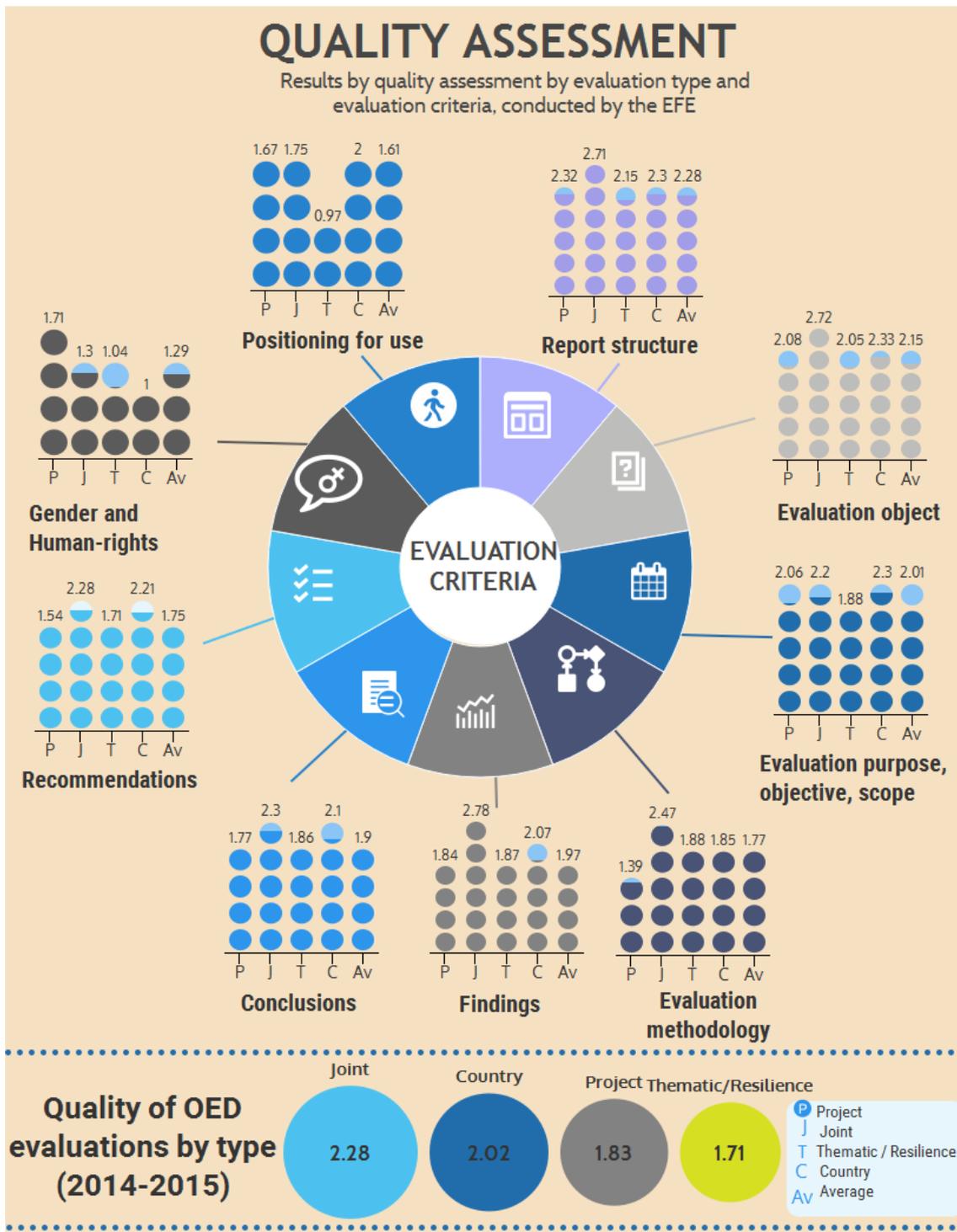
64. The average quality for the 21 selected¹⁹ OED evaluation reports is medium to good, reaching a rating of 1.83 out of 3, as shown in Figure 9. The quality of evaluations by types (country programme evaluation, thematic/resilience evaluation, joint evaluation and project evaluation) shows only minor variations and is also medium in average. Project and thematic/resilience evaluations are slightly below the average of 1.83 (1.71, 1.82 respectively out of 3). This is interesting given the up to 10 times higher evaluation budgets available for thematic and resilience evaluations compared to project evaluations. However, as shown in Figure 9, project evaluations have significantly lower ratings for their conclusions and recommendations. Country programme evaluations are above the average (2.02 out of 3), as are joint evaluations, scoring highest in terms of quality (2.28 out of 3). Both joint evaluations and country programme evaluations are rated in average good with satisfactory quality.

65. When analysing the quality of evaluation reports applying UNEG + criteria²⁰, as shown in Figure 9, an interesting pattern emerges. Joint evaluations score highest in six out of nine sub-criteria: report structure, evaluation objectives, evaluation methodology, findings, conclusions and recommendations. Country programme evaluations score highest for evaluation purpose and positioning the evaluation for use, while project evaluations score highest on gender and human rights.

¹⁹ Stratified random sampling of OED reports, covering the following number and percentages of evaluations published in 2014 and 2015, during the implementation of the Reform Agenda: 2 country evaluations (100%), 9 thematic evaluations (100%), 1 resilience evaluation (100%), 7 project evaluations (23%) and 2 joint evaluations (100%)

²⁰ Annex 3 includes the template used for applying the UNEG+ criteria.

Figure 9. Quality of OED evaluations by type (2014-2015) and evaluation criteria



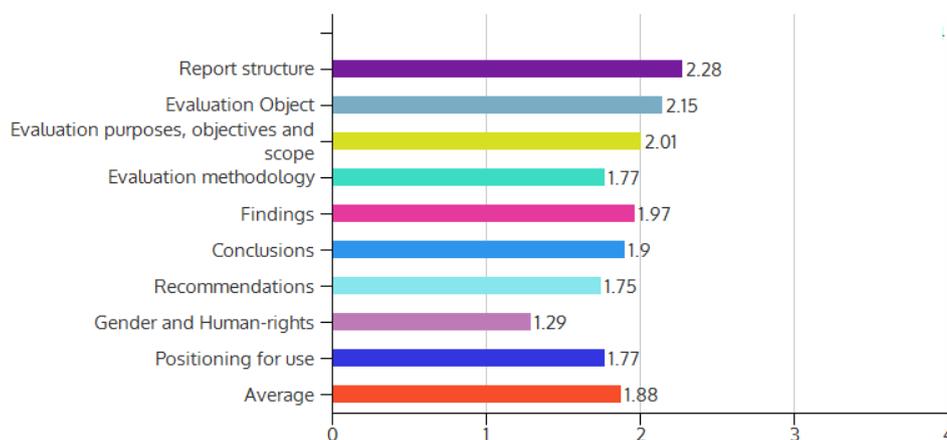
Source: Quality assessment conducted by the IEFEE

66. As presented in Figure 10, the 21 FAO evaluation reports are strongest in terms of the report structure, with satisfactory quality (2.28 out of 3). The description of the evaluation object is similarly strong (2.15 out of 3). They are weakest on integrating a gender and human rights perspective, with a poor rating of 1.29 out of 3, followed by the formulation of recommendations (1.75 out of 3). The latter is of particular importance given their role in the follow-up of evaluations.

67. Those results are of particular interest, as the UK-based Center for Development Impact, of the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex²¹ found a relation between the quality of evaluations and the evaluation budget. While this might be one explanation for the lower quality of project evaluations for a four out of nine of assessment criteria, this seems certainly not the case for well funded thematic/resilience evaluations. The latter also show the lowest quality for four out of nine of assessment criteria but the budget is up to ten times higher than the budget of project evaluations.

68. Australia's Office of Development Effectiveness found that the estimated higher evaluation budget was associated with higher evaluation quality (DFAT 2014²²), however only up to a certain budget size, given the increasing complexity of larger initiatives. In the case of FAO evaluations, this seems less applicable. The quality of thematic/resilience evaluations is less strong for quality criteria that are less related to the complexity of the evaluation object: the report structure, the description of the evaluation object and evaluation purpose, objective and scope, as well as the positioning for evaluation use.

Figure 10. Quality of FAO evaluation reports by quality criteria



Source: Quality assessment conducted by the IEFE

Analysis by quality criteria:

Report structure

69. The report structure is the sub criterion with the highest ratings in average, given that all the reports follow a standard structure, which is commonly request in the ToR.

70. The reasons for not achieving a very satisfactory quality rating are:

- Executive Summary which are too long and clearly exceed the 2-3 pages length recommended (16/21 cases); it should be noted that one of the few exceptions corresponds to one of the longest reports (on crop production)
- Lack of presentation of data collections tools (15/21 cases)
- Absence of a results framework (11/21 cases)

²¹ Center for Development Impact, Institute of Development Studies: Improving Quality: Current Evidence on What Affects the Quality of Commissioned Evaluations. CDR Practice Paper No. 9, March 2015, Lloyd, R., Schatz, F.

²² DFAT, 2014: Quality of Australian Aid Operational Evaluations, June, Canberra: Office of Development Effectiveness, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian Government

- Evaluation matrix not attached to the report (9/21 cases)
- Logframe or Theory of Change is incomplete or not presented (9/21 cases)

Evaluation Object

71. The context is usually described in detail. The object of evaluation is adequately presented in most evaluations. Recurrent weak areas in the evaluation reports are the description of the scale and complexity of the object of the evaluation, information about human resources and a clear description of key stakeholders and their roles.

Evaluation purposes, objectives and scope

72. Evaluation purposes, objectives and scope are well stated in general. This is reflected in the high rating for the quality criterion. The main weaknesses are in the justifications of what the evaluation did and did not cover, as well as the lack of evaluation questions concerning human rights. Furthermore, several OED evaluations include within their scope an examination of comparative advantages, reduced to FAO's strengths, and, in some cases, to "absolute advantages", whereas an assessment of *comparative* advantage would require a comparison with other organizations, something which has not been done in OED evaluations.

Methodology

73. The evaluation methodology is rated medium to high, below the average of other quality criteria. It is presented in a complete and detailed manner in 6 out of 21 cases. In the remaining cases, there are several deficiencies:

- Evaluation criteria are not clearly described or prominently used;
- Evaluation questions are not clearly stated or answered;
- Data collection tools are not attached to the report;
- Sampling framework is not sufficiently described or lacking;
- Limited description of data sources, stakeholders consultation process and the limited inclusion of gender and the almost complete neglect of human rights;
- Gaps and limitations of data and methods used are poorly described or not addressed.

Findings

74. Findings are well presented and adequate in general terms, showing a satisfactory quality. Main weaknesses in some reports are related to findings being:

- Mixed with conclusions and recommendations;
- Less clearly based on evidences;
- Not objectively reported;
- Not clearly linked with the evaluation questions or the evaluation criteria.

Conclusions

75. Conclusions are well presented and adequate in general terms, and are considered relevant for the purpose of the evaluation. However, they are in some evaluations mixed with findings and recommendations or not based on evidences.

Recommendations

76. The results of the quality criterion of recommendations are medium to high. Some reports present deficiencies in

- Inadequate targeting (too broad or untargeted);
- Recommendations mixed with findings and conclusions or not clearly linked with them;
- Insufficient description of the process followed for their elaboration, including the participation of the stakeholders; and
- No clear prioritization of recommendations.

Gender and Human rights

77. The criterion of gender and human rights issues is medium to low, having the lowest rating of all the quality criteria. This is due to its insufficient consideration in the evaluation scope and approach, sometimes because it is not even included in the design of the projects or programmes under evaluation. When gender issues are analyzed in the evaluation reports, the scope of the analysis is quite limited to participation issues and does not cover all gender dimensions. Data disaggregation is only found in a few cases and related to gender analysis. Human rights are not addressed in the majority of the reports, even if included in the ToR or if relevant for the object of evaluation.

Positioning for use

78. Positioning for use is medium to high. In some evaluation reports key information is not provided in order to analyze this topic based on the sub-criteria of knowledge accessibility and sharing, actionability and timeliness. Information about how the evaluation results and knowledge are expected to be shared is lacking in most of the evaluation reports. However, the timeliness of the evaluation is commented to some extent. Actionability is mainly related to the quality of the recommendations provided and varies widely across the evaluation reports.

79. The large majority of evaluation reports do not use graphics and only 4 out of the 21 evaluation reports use maps. This influences the user-friendliness of the reports. 17 out of 21 evaluation reports are built on qualitative data and in many reports data is practically absent. This is surprising given the large amount of stakeholders interviewed for each evaluation. The evaluation of FAO's contribution to Knowledge on Food and Agriculture for example, covered 388 stakeholders through interviews. No quantitative data is presented from those interviews in the evaluation report but from an accompanying survey. This was a missed opportunity to further enhance the quantitative evidence base

80. Where evaluation questionnaires are attached to evaluation reports, scorings or ratings are generally not provided. Quantification of qualitative data is the exception rather than the rule in the sampled OED evaluation reports.

Bibliography/References and literature review

81. Although this is not a criterion used in the template based on UNEG's criteria, it was observed during the review that most OED evaluation reports did not include bibliographical references nor a literature review. For example, the Climate Change evaluation neglected the 5th Overall Performance Study of the GEF²³ (done by the GEF's Independent Evaluation Office), published in 2014 and which makes references to FAO). On the other hand, a good example is the use of IFAD's MICS²⁴ synthesis in OED's

²³ Global Environmental Facility

²⁴ Middle Income Countries

MICS synthesis (facilitated by the fact that the team leader for both evaluations was the same person).

Dissemination /Communication

82. When planning or reviewing an intervention, the likelihood of using an OED evaluation report is in average medium, with evaluation stakeholders having different views about the utility of evaluation reports: 33% of stakeholders gave a high to very high rating and 31% a low to very low rating.

83. For the search of OED products evaluation stakeholders would refer to colleagues or the OED website (medium ratings). Stakeholders are divided over the utility of the OED website, with 24% high to very high ratings and 15% low to very low ratings. The latest download statistics for OED correspond to 2012.

84. FAO Member Countries use OED evaluation reports for planning or reviewing an intervention to an medium degree (2.25 out of 4) as for the use of lessons learned and best practice for planning or review (2.14 out of 4).

85. OED recently started the elaboration and circulation of evaluation briefs which are well prepared and that can facilitate the use of evaluations. Also it should be mentioned the beginning of utilization of videos as a tool for dissemination, as in the case of the climate change evaluation (although the video was produced after the evaluation was conducted, without incorporating content collected while the evaluation took place).

86. There is significant scope for enhancing the dissemination of OED evaluations, both within and outside FAO, to Member Countries and to the development community. The recent “Communication Plan” of OED encourages proactive and strategic communication as a way to increase understanding and ultimately enhance use of evaluation. The overarching objective of the plan is to position evaluations conducted by OED as a key element in the effectiveness and overall achievement of the five strategic objectives of FAO. It proposes the use of a variety of channels. One of them is the redesign of OED’s webpage, which has already been done in a highly satisfactory way. The new OED’s Communication Plan, whose implementation already started, is appropriate and may contribute not only to enhance evaluation use but also to promote FAO’s evaluation culture, reaching also Member Countries and the development community.

The management response process

87. FAO’s (internal) Evaluation Committee (an institutional innovation that deserves to be highlighted, as it includes senior management representatives in an ad-hoc evaluation committee) is overseeing the management response process, with OED serving as a secretariat. This is a way in which evaluations are considered and used at Directors’ level.

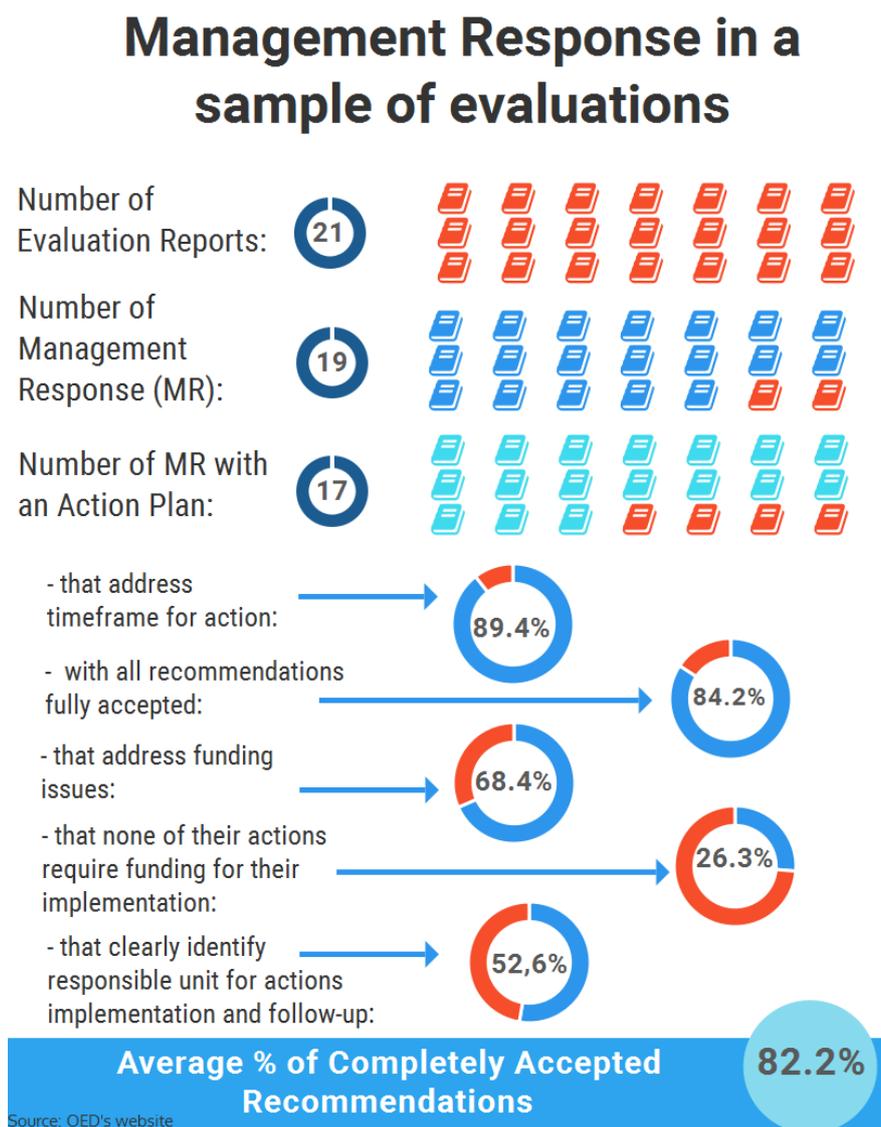
88. Senior technical staff agreed that management response and follow-up are meaningful, but recognized that this process can also highly vary depending on the time needed to reach a consensus. The cost-effectiveness of the process was not always clear for stakeholders.

89. A concern has been expressed that technical staff are removed from the management response process, affecting the ownership of those who are often meant to implement evaluation recommendations. However, this can be a means to increase the

efficiency of the MR process (an issue of concern which was flagged in an assessment of IFAD’s MR process), allowing for a consultative process between Directors and their staff, and ensuring the ownership of the MR by Directors who have a key role to play in implementing the recommendations. Another concern, which will be addressed in sections 3 and 4, is that the role of OED as secretariat of the EC may jeopardize its independence.

90. Figure 11 shows the evidence on management response for the sample of evaluation reports that were subject to the quality assessment presented in this chapter.

Figure 11. Management Response in a sample of evaluations



91. With respect to evaluation follow-up reports, there has been a downward trend since 2013, as shown in Figure 12, particularly in the case of project evaluations (which given the projects’ timeframe there is less need for evaluation follow-up, and indeed what is rather surprising was the high number of project evaluation follow-up reports in 2013). It should be noted that evaluation follow-up reports on the use by Management of recommendations of strategic evaluations (e.g., evaluations for Governing Bodies) are submitted to the PC.

Figure 12. Evaluation Follow-Up Reports

EVALUATION TYPE	2015	2014	2013
Project Evaluations	3	9	16
Evaluations. for Governing Bodies	3	4	5
Country Evaluations	0	4	0
Impact Evaluation	0	1	0
TOTAL	6	18	21

92. Source of data: OED website <http://www.fao.org/evaluation/oed-documents-and-reports/en/>

93. Finally, in the case of country evaluation, it is worthwhile to mention that the follow-up reports indicate slower, if any at all, progress in the implementation of recommendations that involved action from the regional or headquarters levels. As pointed out in the synthesis of the evaluations of *FAO's cooperation with four Middle Income Countries: Armenia, Colombia, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam*, the information available raises concerns about accountability on commitments taken in Management Responses to evaluations.

Key Findings of Chapter 2
<p><i>Usefulness of evaluations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The overall utility of OED evaluations is perceived as medium by evaluation stakeholders and FAO Member Countries, with use for policy formulation/revision in FAO and informing Member Countries' decision making.
<p><i>Relevance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> OED evaluations meet clients needs to a medium extent to inform about project/programme results, possible improvements and decision making, as experienced by evaluation stakeholders, with higher appreciation by Member Countries.
<p><i>Timeliness</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall Member Countries show satisfaction with the timeliness of OED evaluations while evaluation stakeholders are more critical.
<p><i>OED evaluation recommendations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Users of OED evaluation recommendations, evaluation stakeholders and FAO Member Countries perceive OED recommendations as useful to very useful. Recommendations' relevance is best rated while the formulation of recommendations is less actionable for implementation.

Key Findings of Chapter 2
<p><i>Relevance of the evaluation function</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevance of the evaluation function has been enhanced by including evaluations of the strategic objectives into OED's workplan; shortcomings exist in communication, skills set of internal and external evaluators and reporting on evaluation follow-up.
<p><i>Evaluation planning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the biannual evaluation plan FAO management plays a more active role than the PC, which is unclear on the rationale for conducting some of the evaluations submitted to the Committee.
<p><i>Quality of OED evaluations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality for the 21 selected OED evaluation reports is uneven across the different evaluation types, with an average of medium to good; best quality in the case of joint evaluations; • Project and thematic/resilience evaluations are slightly below the average, with the latter having an up to ten times higher budget than project evaluations; • Evaluations are in average strongest on the quality criteria of the report structure and the description of the evaluation object, while lowest quality for gender and human rights, followed by recommendations, the positioning of use and evaluation methodology.
<p><i>Management response process</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management response and follow-up is useful but vary in quality depending particularly on the time needed to reach a consensus.
<p><i>Dissemination</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although progress has been made recently, there is significant scope for enhancing the dissemination of OED evaluations, both within and outside FAO, to Member Countries and to the development community.

94. This chapter assessed the relevance and usefulness of FAO evaluations, whereas the appropriateness and effectiveness of FAO's evaluation function is addressed in the following chapter.

Chapter 3. Appropriateness and effectiveness of FAO evaluation function

95. The key questions that this chapter addresses are: To what extent is the current set up of the evaluation function – including its mandate, structure, responsibilities and processes – appropriate and effective in responding to the evolving needs of FAO and its Member Countries? To what extent is OED enabled to achieve its reform agenda? The answers to both questions are related given that an enabling environment is a precondition for an appropriate and effective evaluation function. Therefore the presentation starts with the enabling environment.

a) Enabling environment for the evaluation function

96. This section discusses the factors that influence the evaluation function at FAO, both those facilitating the exercise of the function and those that are barriers outside of OED (which currently is the only FAO unit involved in evaluation, an aspect that will also be considered in this part of the report).

97. The OED Director is engaged with senior FAO management in periodic meetings and through his participation at the Evaluation Committee (which will be discussed later in this section). This provides opportunities to convey information emerging from evaluations and to identify relevant issues for the evaluation agenda. This engagement of OED's Director has also played a role in promoting an evaluation culture at FAO, on which progress has been made but there is significant scope for further development. The Evaluation Charter, that was adequate at its time, has become a barrier for the expansion of an evaluation culture at FAO. By reducing the evaluation policy to a charter for OED it has transformed OED into an “evaluation silo”.

98. Furthermore, despite the important decentralization process of FAO's operations, the evaluation function has remained centralized and increasingly so, as decentralized/auto-evaluations have been discontinued. This issue of the disconnect between FAO's increased decentralization and a fully centralized evaluation also requires an analysis of FAO's Evaluation Charter²⁵.

On FAO's Evaluation Charter

99. The Immediate Plan of Action (IPA) approved by the 35th Session of the FAO Conference in November 2008 specified that a comprehensive evaluation policy would be incorporated in a Charter for approval by the Council. Even though the Charter's first paragraph provides this background information, the Charter's title is “CHARTER FOR THE FAO OFFICE OF EVALUATION”. In fact, the Evaluation Charter of the Organization, approved in 2010, makes no reference to “decentralized evaluation” and only one reference, between parentheses, to “auto-evaluation”, to indicate in para. 34 that the Evaluation Office “is solely responsible for the conduct of all evaluations (with the exception of auto-evaluations)”. The Charter does not address “auto-evaluation” nor decentralized evaluations (and does not even considered the role that FAO Office of Evaluation could or should play with respect to “auto-evaluation” or decentralized evaluations). The Charter therefore is not a comprehensive evaluation policy.

²⁵ The lack of sufficient evaluators at the country level that could participate in FAO evaluations is an external barrier that would be even more important in the case of decentralized evaluations. See para. 100.

100. UNEG's Norm on Evaluation Policy states that "Taking into account the specificities of the organization's requirements, the evaluation policy should include (...) a framework for decentralized evaluations, where applicable"²⁶. The 2007 FAO IEE pointed out that "The link between auto-evaluations and corporate evaluations is weak; so is the link to management decisions. Its potential as a low-cost instrument that invites intellectual integrity with a potentially high learning return in the evaluation hierarchy could be better exploited" (para. 1176). In 2016 the independent evaluation of FAO's evaluation function inquired about, and searched for, recent auto-evaluations and/or decentralized evaluations and they have been discontinued (rather than strengthened, as it was the case at IFAD and WFP²⁷).

101. The Charter does not address "auto-evaluation" nor decentralized evaluations (and does not even considered the role that FAO Office of Evaluation could or should play with respect to "auto-evaluation" or decentralized evaluations)²⁸. The Charter therefore is not an evaluation policy as mandated by the IPA.

102. Furthermore, national evaluation capacity development is neglected in the Charter, and it is an important area in which OED could make not only a contribution to the development of capacities of Member Countries but also it would help to overcome one of the constraints or "external barriers" that the evaluation function faces, i.e. the lack of enough evaluators at country level (an external barrier that would become even more important for decentralized evaluations)

103. The lack of auto-evaluations/decentralized evaluations is a major gap in FAO's evaluation function, given the importance of decentralization for the implementation of its operations and also in terms of good evaluation practices.

104. Finally, the importance of decentralized evaluations and the role of central evaluation offices with respect to decentralized evaluations was recently indicated in the Management Response to the JIU's "Analysis of the evaluation function in the United Nations system"²⁹. When considering Recommendation 9 of the JIU report, which is about the support to enhance the quality and added value of decentralized evaluation, for which many organizations of the UN expressed support, it is mentioned that several of these organizations noted that responsibility for the implementation of the recommendation should rest with a centralized evaluation function (the background paper #1, at the end of this report, provides a discussion on FAO's Centralized Evaluation, Decentralized Implementation and Decentralized Evaluation).

OED budget and staff sufficiency

105. The IPA established that "The evaluation of the Regular Programme budget will be increased to 0.8-1.0% of the total Regular Programme Budget (over two biennia) and once decided upon by the Governing Bodies, as part of the Programme of Work and Budget approval process, allocated in full to the evaluation office. All contributors of extra-budgetary funds will respect the Council decision that at least 1% of all extra-budgetary funds should be allocated for evaluation". In addition, the Evaluation Charter states that the Regular Programme budget for evaluation will attain the level of at least 0.8% of the total Regular Programme Budget, and it makes no reference to the Council's

²⁶ Norm 12, UNEG (2016)

²⁷ "Evaluation Policy (2016–2021)" (WFP/EB.2/2015/4-A/Rev.1) and IFAD (2011) *Evaluation Policy*.

²⁸ See Background Papers #1 and #2 at the end of this report

²⁹ Note by the Secretary-General. *UN General Assembly, A/70/686/Add.1*, 18 March 2016

decision concerning the percentage of extra-budgetary funds to be allocated for evaluation. Likewise, there is no reference to a budgetary allocation for decentralized and/or auto-evaluation.

106. OED's budget comes from two different sources: i) net appropriations, also called "Regular Programme (RP)", and ii) project overheads put together in a "Trust Fund". The Regular Programme basically fund the core staff and the cost of strategic, thematic and country evaluations included in the rolling work plan. The Trust Fund (TF) finances evaluation management services provided for programmes and projects wholly funded by the project funding. In the case of the latter, operational cost of individual project evaluations is separately funded by the respective project budget.

107. Under the Regular Programme, there is little fungibility between the staff cost and operational cost. The change in the staff cost, i.e. the number and the structure of the posts, requires agreement by the FAO Governing Body and the management in the context of the biennial budget proposal. Currently, the prospect for such agreement seems small. On the operational budget of the Regular Programme, once the budget is approved, OED Director can independently manage it to implement its approved work plan within the financial rules and regulations. Currently, the balance between staff and operational cost is roughly 50-50. While OED has been using more staff evaluation managers to lead and conduct its evaluations, this lack of fungibility compels it to use some consultants in lieu of in-house evaluation managers.

108. On the Trust Fund, the use is very much under the discretion of OED Director. It allows staffing the office with evaluation managers to provide management service to project evaluations and finance some project evaluation activities. The operational cost of project evaluations however is financed by the project budget and hence under the control of the project manager. In practice, OED and the project manager agrees at the outset the budget allocated for evaluation and, within this envelope, OED generally dictates the use as the manager of the evaluation.

109. Figure 14 presents budget estimates and actual costs. One limitation of OED cost data is that they do not include staff costs (FAO does not have a time recording system and no imputation is made of staff time used for specific evaluations which could allow for an estimate of staff cost). The cost for thematic evaluations (excluding staff costs) are between US\$400,000-600,000 while country evaluations between US\$ 160,000-200,000 – the exception being Somalia which due to the dimension of the programme and the difficulties for accessing the terrain had higher costs.³⁰ As shown in Figure 14, cost overruns in 2013 were significantly higher in 2013 than in 2014 and 2015, when the restructuring of OED took place. Furthermore, as mentioned before the process for recruiting staff in OED, discussed below in the section on independence, has led to delays in covering vacancies and to a difficulty to use the budget allocated to OED.

Staff perceptions

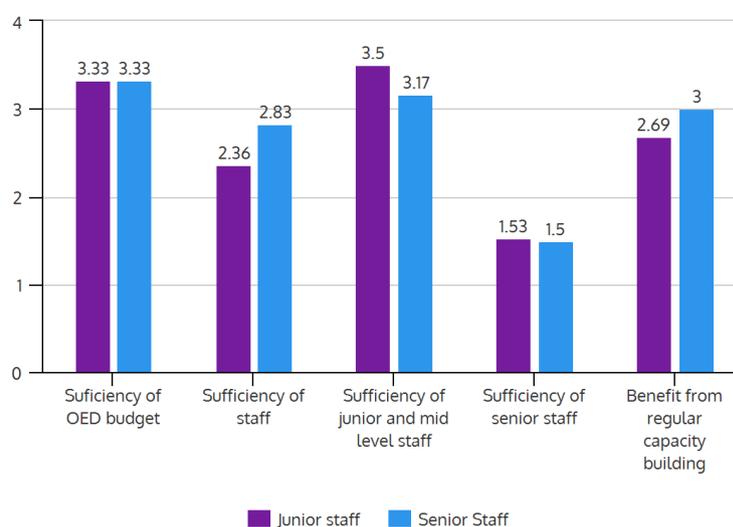
110. OED junior and senior level staff perceptions coincide concerning the sufficiency of budget, as shown in Figure 13.

³⁰ The JIU study on the evaluation function in the UN system provides data on average cost per evaluation for FAO and other UN agencies (IFAD excluded), corresponding to 2013-2012. For those years FAO's evaluation average cost was USD 131,014, whereas the average cost was 87,814 and WFP average 250,000. The range of average cost was from 12,000 (UNCTAD) to 496,963 (UNOIOS). See Jackson et.al. (2014)

111. According to OED staff, there is sufficient budget for evaluations, except for those cases of project evaluations when donor's expectations and requirements need to be negotiated. In fact, budget constraints for project evaluations have limited OED in selecting the best consultants, thus jeopardizing the quality of project evaluations. Cluster evaluations, as in the case of GEF projects, have worked well in addressing those budget shortcomings.

112. The current drive to undertake more evaluations more cheaply does not yet cause concerns among the vast majority of OED junior staff. Junior staff rates the availability of OED budget for quality evaluations as high to very high (3.33 out of 4) and this is echoed by an equally high rating from Senior OED staff (Figure 13). Bringing down the costs of OED evaluations closer to the budgets used in other international organizations results in OED producing an increasing amount of evaluations. This may be pushing OED towards the limit of its capacities with the risk of facing an overload that could jeopardize the quality of its work.

Figure 13. Comparative analysis of staff's perception on budget and staff sufficiency

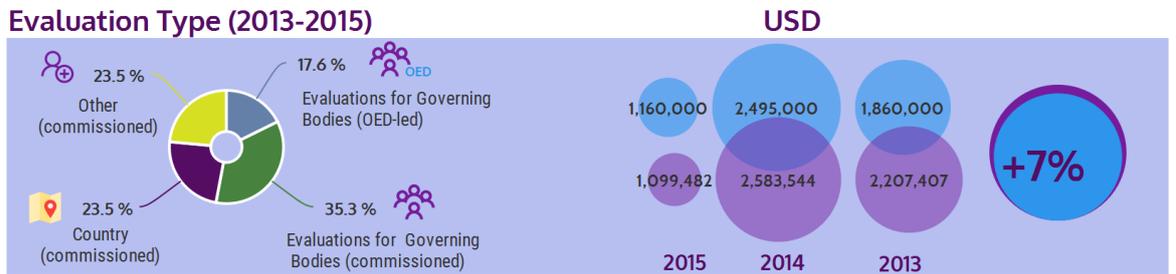
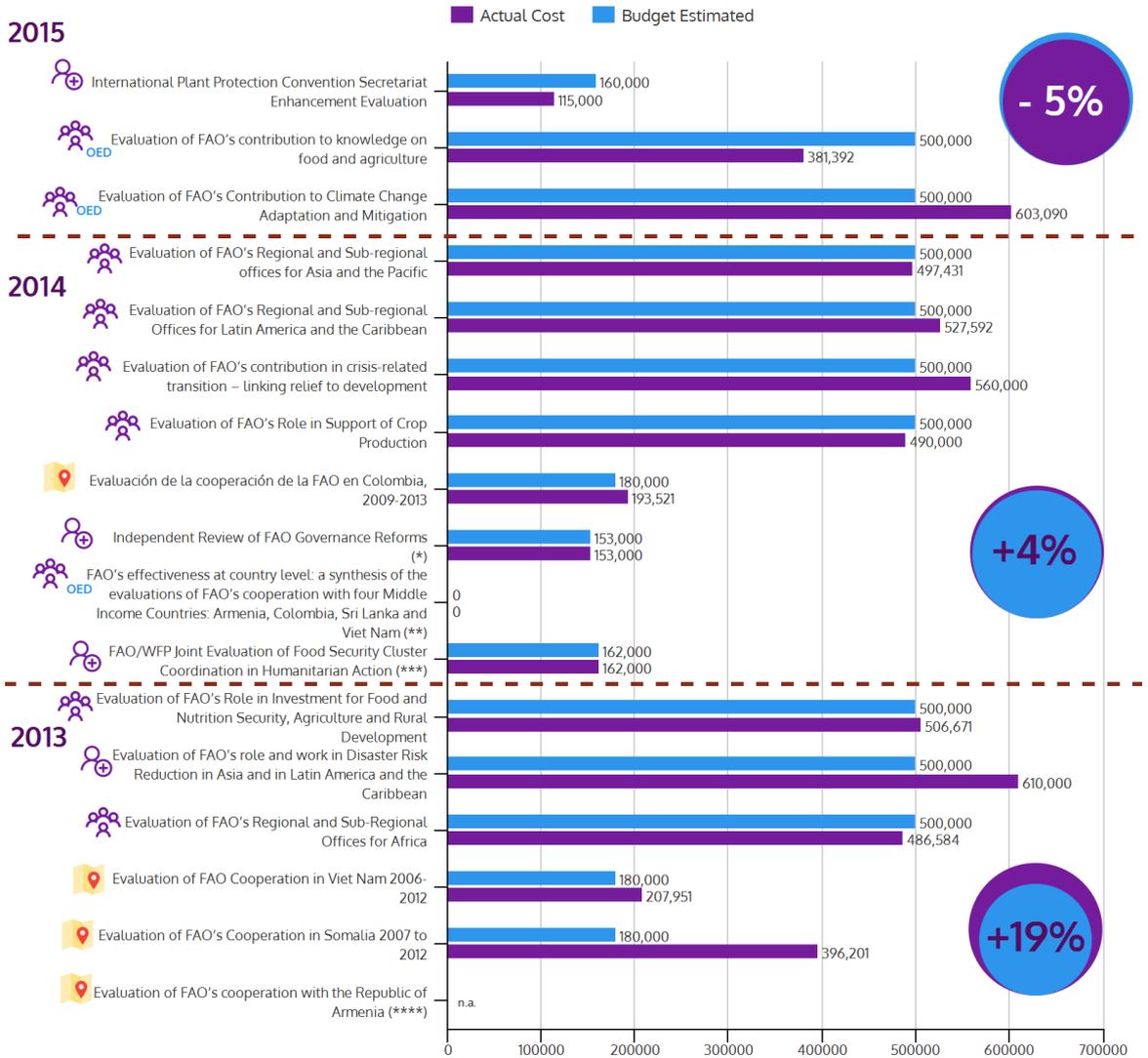


Source: IEFE Survey

113. OED staff indicated that they found useful that there is a ceiling for specific evaluation types, but lack information about specific budgets for each evaluation. It should be noted that cost overruns in 2013 were significantly higher than in 2014 and 2015, as shown in Figure 14.

Figure 14. Budget Estimate and Actual Cost by OED Evaluation Type, 2015-2013 (staff cost excluded); year of finalization of the report

Budget Estimate and Actual Cost by OED Evaluation Type (staff cost excluded); 2013-2015 year of finalization of the report



* The budget of the independent review of FAO governance reforms was approved by Council at its 148th session in December 2013; ** Only staff time; ***This represents 50% of the overall cost of the evaluation; the remaining 50% was contributed by WFP Office of Evaluation; **** Charged under evaluation of regional and sub-regional offices for Europe and central Asia

OED staffing

114. OED has a flexible organizational structure with no organigram since it is not structured in a simple, rigid, hierarchical manner. The reporting lines are established on the basis of tasks (evaluations, functional groups). The downside of the way in which this modern organizational approach was implemented is that junior staff does not have a clear understanding about their roles and responsibilities in OED. This is important because in recent years OED had a strong increase in junior level staff/consultants: 10 out of 15 junior level staff joined OED from 2013 onwards. This compares to 3 out of 8 senior staff joining from 2013 onwards; 7 out of 15 junior staff undertook 5 to 10 evaluations, compared by 5 out of 8 senior staff which shows a large work volume. All senior staff participating in the survey (6 out of 8³¹) have at least 5 years of evaluation experience, with 50% of senior staff having over 10 years of evaluation experience.

115. Overall, the sufficiency of staff is rated as medium by OED junior staff (2.36 out of 4), while senior staff is more positive in this regard with a medium to high rating (2.83 out of 4).

116. OED has sufficient junior level staff but less so at medium level. Sufficiency of junior and mid-level staff is perceived similarly by OED staff. Junior staff provide a high to very high rating (3.5 out of 4). Senior staff gives a high rating (3.17 out of 4). Sufficiency of senior level staff is rated as medium to low, with both junior and senior level staff closely coinciding with their ratings (1.53 out of 4, 1.5 out of 4 respectively).

117. While OED is an office with a growing number of staff, there is an imbalance between few senior staff and a large amount of junior staff and consultants. Thus, junior staff/consultants experience a work overload and lack mentoring, due to the limited number of senior staff.

118. Moreover, the interviews also revealed that in some cases there is a mismatch between staff skills and allocation of staff to specific tasks, which affects the quality of work. For example, when staff have a specific technical background or related technical work experience which is not considered when allocating staff to evaluations in specific technical areas.

119. Staff also indicated a preference for working in specific evaluation types, considering that specializing in types of evaluation their quality will be enhanced.

Definition of roles and responsibilities in OED

120. Junior staff raised the issue of the lack of clear definitions of roles and responsibilities in OED, distinguishing of roles of responsibilities of research assistants, evaluation analysts, associate evaluation managers and evaluation managers. Some research assistants or evaluation analysts had to work as evaluation managers without having the required experience and expertise. The lack of clear roles and responsibilities was identified as one of the barriers in the theory of change presented in fig.2, chapter 2.

Capacity building of OED staff

121. Junior staff appreciate the practice of “learning weeks”. Experience with quality of the events is mixed, depending how much the topics are applicable to OED members.

³¹ Two senior level OED staff exited OED in 2016, after the IEFEE started without being replaced yet by the end of July.

Shorter events tailor made for the needs of smaller group of staff are perceived as an option to enhancing the utility of learning weeks. The level of capacity building offered in OED is rated as medium to high by junior level staff (2.69 out of 4), compared to high ratings of senior staff (3 out of 4), as shown in Figure 13. It should be noted that insufficient staff skills development was highlighted as one of the barriers in the theory of change (Fig.2).

Peer review and a more participatory process

122. The evaluation quality is enhanced through an internal peer review process. While there is no systematic audit trail showing how peer review comments are addressed in evaluation reports, a set of criteria is applied. The quality (and usefulness) of evaluation is also enhanced through changes in the evaluation process. OED moved to a more participatory approach, including reference groups and validation workshops with the aim to empowering evaluands and increase the ownership of evaluation results.

b) Independence of the Evaluation Function

123. Independence, according to the Evaluation Charter, is one of the primary principles underpinning evaluation in FAO. It “should be protected throughout the evaluation process: policy, institutional framework, management of the evaluation function, conduct of evaluations and follow-up. The evaluation function must be located in the Organization outside the line management that it is mandated to evaluate, and have a direct line of reporting to the governing bodies and the Director-General. In this way, it remains separate from those responsible for the design and implementation of the policies and operations that are evaluated. It must be free from undue influence by management through independent control of the financial and human resources allocated to evaluation (...)”. This applies to independent evaluation, but not to decentralized and/or auto-evaluations. In fact, the Charter is not a comprehensive evaluation policy but, as indicated by its title, it is a charter for the FAO Office of Evaluation.³²

124. OED complies with what is established in the Charter concerning evaluation independence, except with respect to the budget, an issue that will be considered below and in the subsection on the budget. So in terms of its location within the organization to a great extent OED is an independent unit; it is not fully independent because of the second reporting line to the DG. Therefore, although it remains separate from those directly responsible for the design and implementation of the policies and operations that are evaluated, it reports to the ultimately responsible for the design and implementation. The governance structure for OED, with the double reporting line, has scope for improvement in terms of independence. It should be mentioned that only 2 out of the 23 Member Countries participating in the IEFES survey indicated that greater attention to ensuring the independence of OED is required.

125. **Organizational and behavioural independence.** According to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards³³, “The independence of the evaluation function comprises two key aspects — behavioural independence and organizational independence. Behavioural independence entails the ability to evaluate without undue influence by any party. Evaluators must have the full freedom to conduct their evaluative

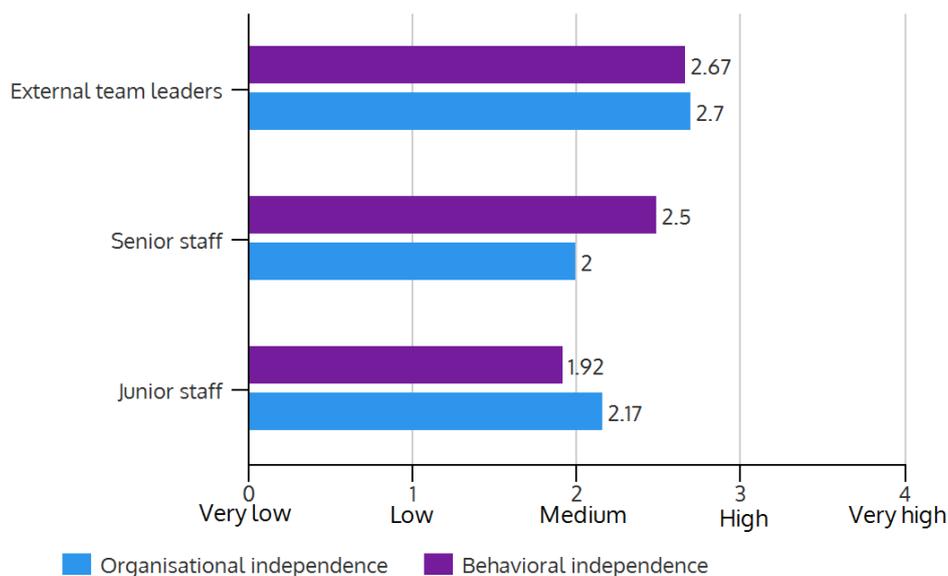
³² The background paper on the Evaluation Charter, included as an annex, provides an analysis of several aspects of the Charter, which are addressed in different parts of this report. The limitations of the Charter as an evaluation policy are considered in more detail in this chapter and in chapter 4.

³³ Revised in June 2016

work impartially, without the risk of negative effects on their career development, and must be able to freely express their assessment. The independence of the evaluation function underpins the free access to information that evaluators should have on the evaluation subject. Organizational independence requires that the central evaluation function is positioned independently from management functions, carries the responsibility of setting the evaluation agenda and is provided with adequate resources to conduct its work. Organizational independence also necessitates that evaluation managers have full discretion to directly submit evaluation reports to the appropriate level of decision-making and that they should report directly to an organization's governing body and/or the executive head" The last part of this statement, concerning organizational independence, corresponds to OED's situation (as indicated in the two preceding paragraphs), including the double reporting line. The organizational location of OED facilitates learning and is compatible with independence, thus in principle minimizing the trade-off between independence and learning. But for an appropriate consideration of this trade-off in practice it is important to consider behavioural independence.

126. ***Behavioural independence.*** The interviews and surveys, and the assessment of evaluation reports produced by OED, revealed that the Office is unbiased in its approach and that the reports are fair and hard-hitting. Concerning conflicts of interest OED has a protocol in place that prevents them, in line with UNEG's norms (this was not the case in the past). Finally, with regard to protection from outside influence and other issues, related to organizational and behavioural independence, the following paragraphs include evidence coming from interviews and surveys.

127. The perceptions of organizational and behavioural independence by OED staff (junior and senior) and by external evaluation team leaders are shown in Figure 15.

Figure 15. Behavioural and Organisational Evaluation Independence

Source: IEFEE Survey

128. OED junior staff rate the organisational independence of OED as medium (2.17 out of 4), compared to a medium to high rating by external evaluation team leaders of OED evaluations (2.7 out of 4).

129. OED Senior staff rate the organizational independence of OED as medium (2 out of 4). One reason of concern is the dual reporting line, with one reporting line to the DG, compared to the organisational independence of evaluation in other UN Rome based agencies like IFAD³⁴. In fact, OED does not have full budgetary independence: for example, approval of travel of OED Director requires FAO Management clearance. Recruitment, administration and travel of evaluation staff and consultants follows the same corporate procedures that apply to other FAO staff. On the recruitment of staff, while OED Director is involved in the selection and assessment of final candidates, the final decision rests with the Director General (whereas in the case of IFAD the final decision rests with the Director of Evaluation). On the recruitment of consultants, the involvement of the management remains largely administrative and pro forma checking of compliance. Employment condition and status also follow FAO policies, such as on the limitations regarding the consultant fees and the provisions for UN retirees.

130. On travel, OED Director has a full authority on the travel of his personnel. While FAO has a travel policy, limiting the number of travel days per annum by the staff (up to 20, 35 or 60 days depending on the position), OED staff is exempted from this limitation due to the nature of its work. However, the travel by the Director requires Director-General's approval in every instance. Generally, travel for managerial or inter-agency meetings that requires the Director for decision making is granted. However, travel for interaction with stakeholders and users of evaluation, including national government officials, is generally declined. Therefore, OED Director currently does not engage in activities to promote buy-in or to present his reports at the national level. Similarly, travel

³⁴ The process through which IFAD's evaluation function evolved towards its independence took several years and it is described in the 2015 publication *The evolution of the independent evaluation function at IFAD*, <https://www.ifad.org/documents/10180/0e375b25-cd1f-41b6-a8f3-1049502ec4c8>

for the purpose of national evaluation capacity development has been declined because OED does not have the mandate for national evaluation capacity development. These travel restrictions of the OED Director, and the limitations of OED's Director to recruit the staff of his office, are limits on the independence of the evaluation function which have a negative influence on the effectiveness of the function.

131. OED Junior staff considers that OED's independence is affected when receiving pushback from FAO Country Representatives, indicating that they are not under "protection from outside influences". The average rating of OED's behavioural independence, including protection from outside influences, is close to medium (1.92 out of 4) for OED junior staff, compared to a medium to high rating in average by external evaluation team leaders of OED evaluations (2.67 out of 4), as reflected in Figure 15. The latter appreciated the free choice of interviews and site visits. External evaluation team leaders indicated that they experienced very little interference with regard to presenting their evaluation conclusions and recommendations in the final evaluation report. External evaluation team leaders perceive their own independence as high to very high with an average rating of 3.75 out of 4.

132. Senior staff rate the behavioural independence of OED with 2.5 out of 4, and made diverging statements in this regard. While they try to be as independent as possible, some OED staff perceived that there are red lines for non-OED senior management, based on the current FAO agenda that OED has to respect; the evaluation of FAO's strategic objectives (SO) was mentioned as an example. This perception affects OED staff behavioural independence.

133. Finally, an issue related to evaluation independence is the conduct by OED of mid-term evaluations. Conducting a mid-term evaluation of an intervention³⁵, including recommendations for the remaining period of implementation, jeopardizes the independence of OED to conduct a final or ex-post evaluation of that intervention, as it generates a conflict of interest (or a perception of conflict of interest) with respect to the recommendations made. At OED the way to deal with this issue has been to change the evaluation team members (so that the team that conducts the final evaluation is different from the team that carried out the mid-term evaluation), but this does not take care of the issue in an appropriate way because it would still be a conflict of interest of the Office rather than of the evaluation team. Chapter 4 proposes a recommendation on this issue, which has also implications in terms of the strategic use of OED's resources, given the opportunity cost of doing mid-term evaluations (which could be part of the program of decentralized evaluations).

c) OED's Contribution to Learning and Accountability

134. The current set-up of OED is making a contribution to better results of FAO's work, in those themes in which it has conducted evaluations, given the use made of them. Furthermore, thorough this improvement in FAO's work it also contributes to the development effectiveness in Member Countries. However, these contributions are limited by OED's evaluation coverage, and by the so far limited (although increasing) use of OED evaluations (as pointed out in the preceding chapter particularly in the section on dissemination/communication).

135. The following paragraphs provide survey and interview based evidence on OED's contribution to learning and accountability:

³⁵ One of the 3 upcoming evaluations listed in OED's website is a mid-term evaluation.

136. OED junior staff and OED's senior staff rate the effectiveness of OED's current set up for enhancing lesson learning from experience in the organisation as medium (2.33 out of 4, and 2 out of 4, respectively). OED's effectiveness in making FAO accountable is perceived as close to medium by OED staff (slightly below 2 out of 4) (Figure 17).

137. For senior staff the main challenge in OED's engagement in enhancing lesson learning in FAO is related to communication. Staff capacities are limited and the professionalization of the communications group in OED started only recently. The lack of sufficient tailor made products, such as thematic syntheses and policy briefs was identified, as well as the limited means used to allow for the visualization of data.

138. OED senior staff have diverging views about OED's role in holding FAO accountable. The reporting line to the Programme Committee is perceived as a strong accountability mechanism. However, not all evaluations are presented to the Programme Committee, such as country evaluations, which reviews a subset of OED evaluations. The follow-up reports to management responses is a process that is perceived as strengthening the accountability role of OED.

139. Senior technical staff indicated a demand for centralized and decentralized post-programme evaluations. These evaluations, which are not conducted at FAO, are perceived as having a potential to contribute to both learning and accountability, and the issue would be reconsidered in chapter 4.

140. Finally, it should be mentioned that in most evaluations ratings are not used and this inhibits learning (as ratings facilitate the identification of best or more promising practices) and accountability (given that ratings also allow to identify bad performing cases). Although ratings have been used occasionally in OED evaluations, for example for project case studies in the evaluation of climate change, in most evaluations they are not used. This limits comparisons (e.g. of thematic results over time or results across countries or regions, or the aggregation of evaluation results). In this respect, the ratings provided in GEF project evaluations are a good practice to allow for comparability.

141. Comparability and aggregation of evaluation results is not planned for and would require a standardization of the methodology and the application of scores/ratings. OED junior staff rate the comparability and aggregation of OED evaluation results as medium (2 out of 4), with senior staff providing a medium-low rating (1.8 out of 4). Senior staff in OED, and PC members, would encourage greater comparability of OED evaluation results and results aggregation.

External evaluation team leaders³⁶

142. A survey to external evaluation team leaders shows that 11 out of 14 team leaders have participated in one or two OED evaluations, showing that OED uses a wider group of consultants to lead teams rather than relying on a small pool of regular team leaders.

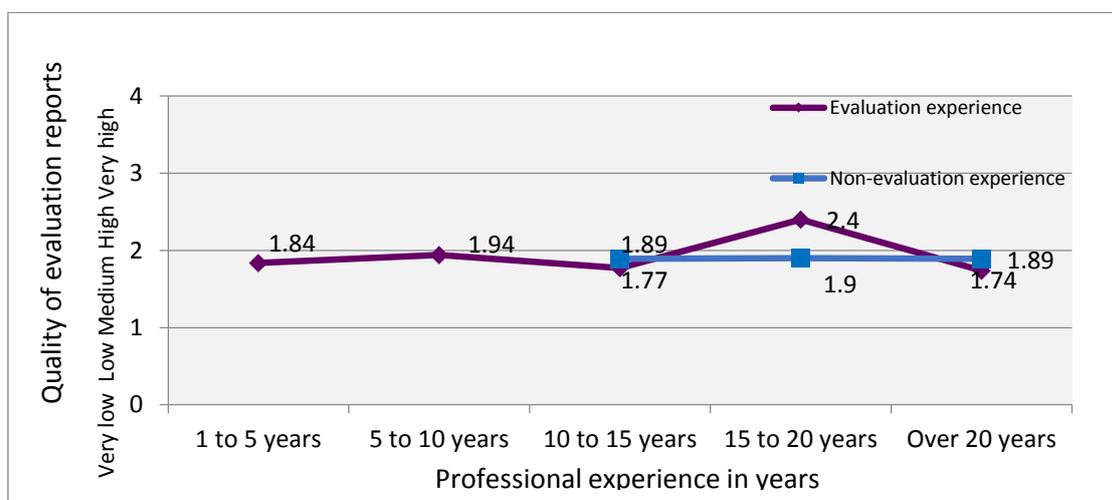
143. External evaluation team leaders show a fair level of professional evaluation experience, with 10 or more years among 9 out of 13 team leaders. All 14 team leaders have more than 10 years of professional experience beyond evaluation. But the quality assessment (presented in the previous chapter) showed that the sample of OED evaluation reports is of medium quality.

³⁶ External consultants that have been team leaders of OED evaluations were international, rather than national, consultants.

144. Figure 16 shows that there is no significant relation between years of professional evaluation experience and the quality of evaluation reports: an increase in years of professional experience is largely unrelated to changes in the quality of evaluation reports in FAO. This showed for both, evaluation experience and non-evaluation experience.

145. The professionalization of evaluators is being discussed at the United Nations Evaluation Group. Out of the 14 external evaluation team leaders surveyed, none had a degree in evaluation or undergone evaluation training of at least six months. Three team leaders have no evaluation specific training. The main means of training for external evaluation team leaders are a series of training modules (7 out of 14 team leader) or training workshops (9 out of 14 team leader). And, of course, learning-by-doing.

Figure 16. Relation between years of professional experience and the quality of evaluation reports



Source: IEFE Survey

146. In this regard, the UK-based Center for Development Impact, of the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex, undertook a study of the factors influencing the quality of evaluations. The study found that: “there is a specific set of skills unique to evaluation that are required to deliver a quality evaluation product”³⁷. As part of this skills set Australia’s Office of Development Effectiveness identified technical knowledge of different evaluation methodologies; knowledge of how to lead an evaluation and the management of both international and local consultants; strong diplomatic and interpersonal skills; expertise in collecting, analyzing and presenting data; and writing credible reports in a tight timescale as key evaluation skills. Also a recent evaluation of the Norwegian Aid Administration’s approach to results measurement and evaluability confirmed the importance of having strong evaluation skills within the evaluation team (Itad/Chr. Michelsen Institute 2014: 81). And, as indicated above, the full set of these evaluation skills were not a characteristic of OED evaluation teams to ensure a consistent high level of quality.

147. *OED Business Model*. Before 2014 OED evaluations were led by external consultants who had the responsibility for the evaluations, consistent with what is indicated in the Charter of OED. Since 2014 OED implemented the recommendation of

³⁷ Center for Development Impact, Institute of Development Studies: Improving Quality: Current Evidence on What Affects the Quality of Commissioned Evaluations. CDR Practice Paper No. 9, March 2015, Lloyd, R., Schatz, F.

the Evaluation Peer Review, becoming responsible for the evaluations that it delivers. It hires consultants to support the OED team leader who is responsible for the evaluations (which are not outsourced).

Inclusion of Cross cutting Issues in OED evaluations

148. The views of OED staff about the inclusion of cross-cutting issues in the OED evaluations, and the effectiveness of OED set-up, are shown in Figure 17.

Figure 17. Comparative analysis of OED junior and senior staff perceptions on cross-cutting issues and effectiveness of OED set up.



149.

Source: IEFEE Survey

150. At UNEG level national evaluation capacity building is high on the agenda, as show in the recent revision of UNEG Norms and Standards. It should be noted that FAO's Evaluation Charter makes no reference to evaluation capacity building. OED's contribution to national capacity building is limited by its mandate. To date, OED's financial and human resources are not directly targeted to national capacity building. However, there is an indirect effect on capacity building at the country level through hiring national consultants and providing them with opportunities for learning by doing. However, particularly in countries with small populations, finding impartial national consultants constitutes a challenge for the independence of OED evaluations. Junior staff rate OED's contribution to national capacity building as medium (2.27 out of 4), similarly as OED senior staff's assessment (2.20 out of 4).

151. Gender is systematically addressed in evaluation ToR and efforts made to include a gender perspective into OED evaluations. The gender team and the annual report on gender provide evidence for those efforts. However, the OED still lacks a common understanding about the gender perspective and evaluation recommendations on gender are still rare. Junior staff rate the inclusion of a gender perspective into evaluation as medium (2.43 out of 4) whereas Senior staff is more critical (2.17 out of 4).

152. A human-rights perspective is not systematically reflected in OED evaluations, resulting in a medium to low rating by junior staff (1.67 out of 4), while senior staff is

more critical with a low rating (1.33 out of 4). The assessment of a sample of OED evaluations showed that 90% of the evaluation reports made no reference to human rights.

OED's roles and responsibilities for RBM in FAO

153. OED receives demands for RBM support which some OED staff think that are beyond OED's mandate and capacity. However, it should be noted that the Evaluation Charter states that the Office of Evaluation has an advisory role on results-based management (RBM). OED junior staff rates OED's roles and responsibilities for RBM in FAO as low (0.89 out of 4), with senior staff also providing a low rating (1.33 out of 4). OED has links with RBM focal points in the Regional Offices through the FAO RBM network, but demand from countries is insufficiently channelled through the focal points. There is significant scope for enhancing OED's contribution to RBM at FAO, and OED's work recent work related to FAO's strategic objectives is a move in the right direction.

OED's roles and responsibilities for creating an evaluation culture

154. OED has been playing a limited role in creating an evaluation culture in FAO. Some examples are the evaluability work related to the Strategic Objectives (which also has a potential to contribute to RBM) and participation in the SDG2 evaluability technical seminar, which was jointly designed and implemented in 2015 with the evaluation offices of the other UN Rome Based Agencies. Furthermore, the planned evaluations for each of FAO's Strategic Objectives also contributes to the creation of an evaluation culture at FAO. OED's roles and responsibilities for creating an evaluation culture in FAO is rated by junior staff slightly higher than by OED senior staff (2.4 vs. 2.0 out of 4).

d) Efficiency and synergies within the context of oversight functions

155. In some UN organizations there have been concerns with what has been called "oversight overload", i.e., the duplication or overlapping of oversight functions. In the case of FAO there have been attempts to minimize the possible overlapping and to maximize synergies between OIG and OED³⁸. For example, in the case of South Sudan, where there was coordination during the planning and implementation of separate missions, or in the Kyrgyzstan, where the evaluation was subsequent to the audit, whereas in Somalia the audit was subsequent to the evaluation. A practice that has been implemented is to share draft work programmes and TORs, which helps to identify and prevent eventual overlaps and to promote synergies. The risk with joint missions is that they can generate confusions concerning the purpose of the mission, and may jeopardize the willingness of the evaluatees to have an open attitude towards the evaluators. However, it should be mentioned that from the interviews conducted by the IEFE what emerged is a general perception that there is no overlapping but complementarities between evaluation and audits, and that both functions contribute to generate donors' trust in FAO.

156. Based on the findings in this and in the preceding chapter, the following chapter draws a set of conclusions and formulates recommendations to enhance the contribution of FAO's evaluation function to accountability and learning of FAO.

³⁸ Described in the presentation "Lessons learned: collaboration between OED and OIG in 2015", Feb.2016.

Key Findings of Chapter 3	
<i>Enabling environment for the evaluation function</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The OED Director is periodically engaged with senior FAO management for information sharing and attempts to promote an evaluation culture; • OED operates almost as an “evaluation silo”, given an outdated Evaluation Charter, which also affects evaluations in an increasingly decentralized operational setting (see key findings on the Evaluation Charter).
<i>Independence of the Evaluation Function</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OED complies with what is established in the Charter concerning evaluation independence, except with respect to the budget; • In terms of its location within the organization to a great extent OED is an independent unit; it is not fully independent because of the second reporting line to the DG; • Behavioural and Organizational evaluation independence are limited.
<i>OED’s Contribution to Learning and Accountability</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current set-up of OED is making a contribution to better results of FAO’s work, but is limited by OED’s evaluation coverage, the limited use of OED evaluations and the lack of a systematic use of ratings; • Another factor that limits OED’s contribution to learning and accountability is that evaluation results are neither compared nor aggregated.
<i>FAO’s Evaluation Charter</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Charter does not address “auto-evaluation” nor decentralized evaluations (and does not even considered the role that FAO Office of Evaluation could or should play with respect to “auto-evaluation” or decentralized evaluations). The Charter therefore is not a comprehensive evaluation policy (which was mandated by the IPA); • National evaluation capacity development is neglected in the Charter; • The lack of auto-evaluations/decentralized evaluations is a major gap in FAO’s evaluation function, given the importance of decentralization for the implementation of its operations and also in terms of good evaluation practices.
<i>OED budget and staff sufficiency</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is sufficient budget for evaluations, except for some cases of project evaluations; • Bringing down the costs of OED evaluations results in OED producing an increasing amount of evaluations which risks jeopardizing the quality of evaluations; • OED has sufficient junior level staff/consultants but less so at medium and senior level.
<i>Definition of roles and responsibilities in OED</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of clear definitions of roles and responsibilities in OED, particularly for junior staff.
<i>Capacity building for OED staff</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The practice of “learning weeks” is appreciated by OED staff, with some room for improvement.
<i>External evaluation team leaders</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OED used a wide group of consultants to lead teams rather than relying on a small pool of regular team leaders; • The number of years of professional experience of external evaluation team leaders is largely unrelated to the quality of evaluation reports in FAO;

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific set of skills unique to evaluation that are required to deliver a quality evaluation product seem not fully unleashed by OED's selection of external evaluation team leaders.
<p><i>Cross cutting issues</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National evaluation capacity building is not within OED's mandate and neither financial or human resources are allocated for this purpose; • The inclusion of a gender perspective into OED evaluation is medium, despite being systematically addressed in evaluations' ToR; • With very few exceptions OED evaluations neglect a human-rights perspective.
<p><i>OED's roles and responsibilities for RBM in FAO</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OED staff perceives its role for RBM in FAO as low, given issues of mandate (despite that the Evaluation Charter requests OED to play an advisory role for RBM) and staff capacities (the latter appears to be a key constraint).
<p><i>Relation between OED and Internal Audit</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OED and Internal Audit have been coordinating their activities and the general perception is that there is no significant overlapping but complementarities between evaluation and audits, and that both functions contribute to generate donors' trust in FAO.

Chapter 4: Conclusions and Recommendations

157. The conclusions in this chapter are based on the findings in the preceding chapters and underpin the recommendations for strengthening the evaluation function at FAO³⁹.

Conclusions

158. Conclusion 1. OED made significant progress during the last biennium to improve its usefulness but there is scope for improvement both in learning and accountability

159. OED has become more aligned with FAO's strategic approach, it made progress in systematizing its practice in guidelines, in implementing a training/learning programme for its staff, and in the design and implementation of an appropriate communication plan for a better dissemination of its evaluations. OED is also an active participant in the UN Evaluation Group.

160. On the other hand, there are limitations in the relevance of OED's evaluations and recommendations and the timeliness of its evaluations, which affects the overall utility of FAO. OED meets the needs of FAO Member Countries to a higher degree than those of evaluation stakeholders in FAO's HQ and country offices, of implementation partners and partner governments. The timeliness of OED evaluations is a key factor affecting the relevance of evaluation results, with Member Countries showing higher satisfaction than evaluation stakeholders. Clients of OED evaluations are largely satisfied with OED recommendations while actionable formulations could be further strengthened.

161. Despite mainly sufficient evaluation budgets, the quality of OED evaluations is uneven across the different evaluation types. Shortcomings in the evaluation methodology and the very limited consideration of gender and human rights are of concern. As is the fact that quality of evaluation reports is highest in joint evaluations, in which OED applies a joint evaluation approach rather than its own. The quality of OED evaluations is also affected by an imbalance between a large group of junior staff with insufficient mid level and senior level staff. Combined with an increasing OED evaluation portfolio and fluent roles and responsibilities of OED staff, staff capacities get overstretched.

162. The use of evaluations for decision making and accountability has room for improvement. Two of the areas that show shortcomings are the insufficient use of quantitative data and ratings in OED evaluations and the lack of comparability and aggregation of evaluation results, unlike what is done by other UN organizations evaluation offices.

163. Conclusion 2. The independence of OED is limited, particularly its behavioural independence, whereas its organizational independence is affected by design and due to a set of practices.

164. OED staff perceived that they are not sufficiently protected from outside influences, thus influencing OED's behavioural independence. With respect to organizational independence, the reporting line to the DG, although it has not influenced the performance of OED, it imposes a structural limit to its independence, but it reduces the risk of isolation; however, there are two aspects in which the independence of OED requires strengthening: eliminating restrictions on the OED Director's travel related to evaluations and allowing the OED Director to make the final decision to recruit OED's

³⁹ Annex 5 shows in tabular form the correspondence among findings, conclusions and recommendations

regular staff. Furthermore, OED's role as secretary of FAO's Management (internal) Evaluation Committee affects the perception of independence of OED. Last and not least, conducting both mid-term *and* final evaluations of projects or programmes jeopardizes OED's independence (as it would be assessing its own recommendations).

165. Conclusion 3. There is a critical gap in FAO's evaluation function: decentralized/auto-evaluation

166. FAO has been strongly increasing the decentralization of its operations but the evaluation function is fully centralized. Auto-evaluations that were done in the past, and whose potential contribution was considered by the IPA, have been discontinued. Decentralized evaluations are not conducted. This gap in FAO's evaluation function deprives the Organization of an important source of learning, it limits the coverage of operations that are evaluated and does not enable OED to validate auto/decentralized evaluations, which not only can enhance the quality of these evaluations but it can also lighten the burden of OED, allowing it to expand its data base of evaluations and therefore enhancing its contribution to learning and accountability.

167. Conclusion 4. The rationale for OED's work programme is not fully communicated to the Programme Committee (PC)

168. The rotation of PC members and their limited participation in the process of developing OED's work programme has resulted in PC members not being fully informed on the reasons why some evaluations were conducted by OED. This communication gap affected the PC use of evaluations and therefore the contribution that evaluations can make to FAO's and Member Countries learning and FAO's accountability.

169. Conclusion 5. OED is not empowered to contribute to evaluation capacity development

170. The contribution of OED to evaluation capacity development of Member Countries and/or to FAO has been marginal. OED has neither dedicated funds nor a mandate for evaluation capacity development.

171. Conclusion 6. The "Evaluation Charter for OED" has become outdated

172. Although the elaboration and approval in 2010 of an evaluation charter for OED was an important step in the development of FAO's evaluation function, it neglects auto-evaluation and decentralized evaluation (the Charter actually is not an evaluation policy for FAO but a charter for OED), it does not make reference to evaluation capacity development and it does not describe and prescribe in an adequate way processes that should be implemented so as to optimize the contribution of FAO's evaluation function to learning and accountability⁴⁰.

Recommendations

173. Recommendation 1. A strategy and action plan for enhancing learning and accountability to be implemented by OED by June 2017. Recommendation address to OED's Director.

⁴⁰ Furthermore, as indicated in standard 1.2 on Evaluation policy in the 2016 United Nations Evaluation Group Norms and Standards for Evaluation "the evaluation policy...should be periodically reviewed and updated in order to support the evaluation function" and "The governing body and/or the executive head of the organization should approve an evaluation policy that is in line with both the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation and with the organization's goals and strategies". See also background papers #1 and #2

174. This strategy and plan should include i) Addressing human resource issues, mainly on the imbalance between junior level staff on the one hand and mid and senior level staff on the other hand through hiring more senior staff with sound evaluation expertise, and clarifying OED staff roles and responsibilities in OED (including mentoring) relating them to the respective staff grade; ii) a rating system to be applied in all (or most) evaluations so as to be able to make comparisons across sectors/areas/organizations, and to aggregate results; iii) an annual report that should be an OED flagship presenting evaluation results (not just summaries of evaluations), with ratings for the different types of evaluations and by regions, and with cross-cutting analysis, systemic or transversal issues and an assessment of the implementation of evaluation recommendations; iv) internal and/or external quality assurance and enhancement of OED evaluations at two stages of the evaluation process: at the stage of presenting data collection tools and at the stage of draft reporting; the external quality assurance could be implemented either through outsourcing or through reciprocal peer reviews with WFP and IFAD's evaluation offices, an option that has the additional benefit of sharing knowledge among the RBA without incrementing costs; v) request to use data collection tools in TOR that allow for capturing quantitative data from interviews and surveys; vi) evaluation executive summaries not exceeding 4 pages; vii) inclusion of literature reviews in evaluation reports; viii) compliance with UNEG Quality Checklist (which includes specific quality criteria for gender and human rights) for evaluation reports, incorporating them as an annex to the TOR for OED evaluations; ix) elaboration of policy briefs, transversal reports, and just-in-time reports (e.g. prior to development of a new policy) and x) performance indicators and benchmarks for the new OED strategy and action plan.

175. Recommendation 2. To strengthen OED's independence, which would enhance the credibility of FAO, a) OED's Director should ensure that OED staff perceive that they are protected from outside influence, b) the independence of OED should be strengthened and adequately protected (eliminating limitations in the travel of OED Director related to the evaluation function, and allowing OED Director to make the final decision for the recruitment of OED regular budget staff); c) OED's Director should not be the Secretary of the Evaluation Committee and d) OED should not conduct mid-term evaluations

176. Whereas recommendation 2a) is to be implemented by OED's Director by June 2017, through communications with OED staff, recommendation 2b) is addressed to the PC, in consultation with the DG, and should be completed by September 2017. Recommendation 2c) is addressed to the Chair of the Evaluation Committee for implementation during the first quarter of 2017, whereas recommendation 2d) is to be implemented by OED's director by the last quarter of 2017 (and it is linked to the following recommendation concerning decentralized/auto-evaluations and to recommendation 6, on the Evaluation Policy).

177. Recommendation 3. FAO should develop a programme of decentralized evaluations, including mid-term evaluations, through its Regional Offices, funded with a proportion of the trust funds for evaluations; this recommendation is addressed to FAO's Management (namely TCD and DDO, in consultation with the Evaluation Committee and the ODG) with the support of OED, and could be implemented by September 2017.

178. Through this programme of decentralized evaluations FAO will strengthen the evaluation function, complementing the independent evaluation (for which OED is responsible) with evaluations conducted by regional or country offices, endowed with a budget for this purpose, which could use a proportion of resource of the trust funds for evaluation (the remaining funds remaining for OED), and eventually additionally donor

funds. The methodology to be employed in conducting decentralized/auto-evaluations should be harmonized with OED's methodology (OED could support this process cooperating in the preparation of guidelines for decentralized evaluations and/or by outposting staff once OED has addressed its human resources issues, and through internal evaluation capacity building).

179. Recommendation 4. OED should develop its work programme with participation of the PC (and in consultation with the DG), and when evaluations are submitted for discussions at PC meetings there should be a clear explanation of the reasons why the evaluation was conducted. This recommendation should be implemented by OED during the first semester of 2017.

180. The rotation of PC members and their limited participation in the process of developing OED's work programme has resulted in PC members not being fully informed on the reasons why some evaluations were conducted by OED. This communication gap affected the PC use of evaluations and therefore the contribution that evaluations can make to FAO's and Member Countries learning and FAO's accountability.

181. Recommendation 5. OED could include in its work-programme an internal and external evaluation capacity development (ECD) initiative, for which it could mobilize donor funds and establish partnership agreements. To be implemented by OED by September 2017.

182. The ECD initiative could be designed and/or implemented jointly with the evaluation offices of the other UN Rome based agencies, organizing joint ECD activities in Member Countries. These activities could also involve staff from FAO's Regional and Country Offices, strengthening their capacities to manage and/or conduct decentralized/auto-evaluations. This recommendation would also require an adjustment of the Evaluation Charter, which is the next and last recommendation.

183. Recommendation 6. The "Evaluation Charter for OED" should be replaced by an "Evaluation Policy for FAO". To be implemented during the first semester of 2017 by a task force involving the PC, supported by OED and in consultation with the Office of the DG, the Legal Office, and (for aspects related with decentralized/auto-evaluation) TCD, DDO and the Evaluation Committee.

184. The Immediate Plan of Action (IPA) approved by the 35th Session of the FAO Conference in November 2008 specified that a comprehensive evaluation policy would be incorporated in a Charter for approval by the Council. The Charter approved in 2010 was restricted to OED. Given the important decentralization process that FAO has gone through since 2010, and the emphasis given to evaluation capacity development by Member Countries, as well as by UN agencies, and the issue in 2016 of a revised version of the United Nations Evaluation Group *Norms and Standards for Evaluation* it would be appropriate to adapt the Charter to take into account these changes, as well as to strengthen the independence of OED, along the lines of what was indicated in recommendation 2 and in other parts of this report.

185. These recommendations would enhance the contribution of FAO's evaluation function to the quality of FAO's work, and its support to learning and accountability of the Organization.

Annexes

Annex 1: Questionnaires and Surveys

The following questionnaires and surveys provide a framework to guide the interviews and the data collection process, during which a subset of the questions will be actually used.

A mapping of respondents is presented in Annex 2.

Evaluation of FAO's Evaluation Function – interview questions *for Programme Committee*

Relevance and usefulness of evaluations

- 1.1 Have you been involved in some OED evaluations? Have you used some OED evaluation(s)? Which? Were the evaluations useful? (any examples)
- 1.2 To what extent does the selection of evaluations and targeting its recommendations facilitate the utility of OED evaluations?
- 1.3 How timely are OED evaluation reports to support the decision-making process in FAO and among its external stakeholders? If required, how could timeliness be improved?
- 1.4 How meaningful and cost-effective are a) the processes and actions taken by FAO's management in response to the findings and recommendations from OED's reports? b) the tracking of implementation of evaluation recommendations
- 1.5 Do you have any comment on the process by which the biannual evaluation plan is prepared and adopted? To what extent are the needs of internal and external stakeholders considered in this process?
- 2.1 To what extent is OED an independent unit?
 - (a) in terms of its location within the organization
 - (b) with respect to its behaviour (is OED unbiased in its approach to its work?)
 - (c) as can be judged from its products (are reports fair and hard-hitting?)
 - (d) in terms of its governance structure
 - (e) with regard to protection from outside influences
 - (f) concerning conflicts of interest (do evaluators evaluate projects, programs or activities in which they took part?)
- 2.2 To what extent is the system of evaluation currently set up responding to the needs of FAO, in particular those of programme managers or resource partners, including decentralized FAO operations?
- 2.3 Do you think that OED evaluations should allow for comparability (e.g. FAO's thematic results over time or results across countries or regions) and for the aggregation of evaluation results?
- 2.4 To what extent is the current set-up of OED effective in:
 - (a) contributing to better results of FAO's work?
 - (b) contributing to the development effectiveness in Member Countries?
 - (c) enhancing the process of learning from experience?
 - (d) making FAO accountable?
- 3.1 To what extent are evaluation and other oversight functions (such as internal audit) complementary or overlapping?
- 3.2 To what extent are you satisfied with the relationship between OED and the Programme Committee? Can it be improved?
- 3.3 If necessary, how could OED improve the relevance and usefulness of its evaluations?

Evaluation of FAO's Evaluation Function – interview questions *for FAO senior management*

Relevance and usefulness of evaluations

- 1.1 Have you been involved in some OED evaluations? Have you used some OED evaluation(s)? Which? Were the evaluations useful? (examples)
- 1.2 To what extent does the selection of evaluations and targeting its recommendations facilitate the utility of OED evaluations?
- 1.3 How timely are OED evaluation reports to support the decision-making process in FAO and among its external stakeholders? If required, how could timeliness be improved?
- 1.4 How meaningful and cost-effective are a) the processes and actions taken by FAO's management in response to the findings and recommendations from OED's reports? b) the tracking of implementation of evaluation recommendations
- 1.5 Do you have any comment on the process by which the biannual evaluation plan is prepared and adopted? To what extent are the needs of internal and external stakeholders considered in this process?
- 1.6 If necessary, how could OED improve the relevance and usefulness of its evaluations?

Appropriateness and effectiveness of the evaluation function

- 2.1 To what extent is OED an independent unit?
- in terms of its location within the organization
 - with respect to its behaviour (is OED unbiased in its approach to its work?)
 - as can be judged from its products (are reports fair and hard-hitting?)
 - in terms of its governance structure
 - with regard to protection from outside influences
 - concerning conflicts of interest (do evaluators evaluate projects, programs or activities in which they took part?)
- 2.2 To what extent is the system of evaluation currently set up responding to the needs of FAO, in particular those of programme managers or resource partners, including decentralized FAO operations?
- 2.3 Do you think that OED evaluations should allow for comparability (e.g. FAO's thematic results over time or results across countries or regions) and for the aggregation of evaluation results?
- 2.4 To what extent is the current set-up of OED effective in:
- contributing to better results of FAO's work?
 - contributing to the development effectiveness in Member Countries?
 - enhancing the process of learning from experience?
 - making FAO accountable?
- 2.5 What is your view about self- or auto evaluation at FAO?
- 2.6 To what extent are evaluation and other oversight functions (such as internal audit) complementary or overlapping?
- 2.7 If necessary, how could the appropriateness and effectiveness of the evaluation function be improved?

Evaluation of FAO's Evaluation Function – interview questions *for FAO senior technical staff*

Relevance and usefulness of evaluations

- 1.1 Have you been involved in some OED evaluations? Have you used some OED evaluation(s)? Which? Were the evaluations useful? (examples)
- 1.2 To what extent does the selection of evaluations and targeting its recommendations facilitate the utility of OED evaluations?
- 1.3 How timely are OED evaluation reports to support the decision-making process in FAO and among its external stakeholders? If required, how could timeliness be improved?
- 1.4 How meaningful and cost-effective are a) the processes and actions taken by FAO's management in response to the findings and recommendations from OED's reports? b) the tracking of implementation of evaluation recommendations
- 1.5 Do you have any comment on the process by which the biannual evaluation plan is prepared and adopted? To what extent are the needs of internal and external stakeholders considered in this process?
- 1.6 If necessary, how could OED improve the relevance and usefulness of its evaluations?

Appropriateness and effectiveness of the evaluation function

- 2.1 To what extent is OED an independent unit?
 - (a) in terms of its location within the organization
 - (b) with respect to its behaviour (is OED unbiased in its approach to its work?)
 - (c) as can be judged from its products (are reports fair and hard-hitting?)
 - (d) in terms of its governance structure
 - (e) with regard to protection from outside influences
 - (f) concerning conflicts of interest (do evaluators evaluate projects, programs or activities in which they took part?)
- 2.2 To what extent is the system of evaluation currently set up responding to the needs of FAO, in particular those of programme managers or resource partners, including decentralized FAO operations?
- 2.3 What is your view concerning self (or auto) evaluations at FAO?
- 2.4 Do you think that OED evaluations should allow for comparability (e.g. FAO's thematic results over time or results across countries or regions) and for the aggregation of evaluation results?
- 2.5 What is your view concerning OED's roles and responsibilities in result-based management and the creation of an evaluation culture to respond to demands from clients in HQ and the field?
- 2.6 To what extent are evaluation and other oversight functions (such as internal audit) complementary or overlapping?
- 2.7 If necessary, how could the appropriateness and effectiveness of the evaluation function be improved?

Evaluation of FAO's Evaluation Function – survey questions *for stakeholders/users of OED evaluations: a) targeted according to sampled evaluations; b) all FAO Member States*

A. Personal information

1. In which organization are you working?

Organization	Please tick
FAO Rome	
FAO, Regional Office	
FAO, Sub-regional Office	
FAO, Country Office	
Government	
Civil Society	
Consultancy company	
Other	

2. What is your position in your organization?

Your position	Please tick
Senior management (D1 or D2)	
Mid-level management (P4 or 5)	
Junior position (P1,2,3)	
Other	

3. As a stakeholder, in how many evaluations have you been involved with FAO's Evaluation Office (OED) since 2010?

Number of FAO evaluations involved	Please tick
1	
2	
3 to 5	
More than 5	

B. Your experience with evaluations by FAO's Evaluation Office (OED)

4. a) How would you assess the utility of evaluations undertaken by FAO's Evaluation Office (OED) to inform your work?

Please state the name of the evaluation you are referring to. In case you would like to comment on more than 1 evaluation, please use also question 4b) below. Otherwise skip question 4b).

	Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
<i>Name of the evaluation (please insert):</i>					
To what extent responded the evaluation to your needs?					
To what extent is the evaluation used?					
For which purpose did you use the evaluation? Please explain					
Which of the factors below affected the utility of the evaluation:					
Transparency of the process					
Consultative approach during the data collection					
Reporting process with feedback opportunities					
Presentation/discussion of evaluation results in a workshop-style setting					
Clarity of recommendations					
Overall level of ownership of evaluation process and results					

4. b) How would you assess the utility of evaluations undertaken by FAO's Evaluation Office (OED) to inform your work?

	Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
<i>Name of the evaluation (please insert):</i>					
To what extent responded the evaluation to your needs?					
To what extent is the evaluation used?					
For which purpose did you use the evaluation? Please explain					
Which of the factors below affected the utility of the evaluation:					
Transparency of the process					
Consultative approach during the data collection					
Reporting process with feedback opportunities					
Presentation/discussion of evaluation results in a workshop-style setting					
Clarity of recommendations					
Overall level of ownership of evaluation process and results					

5. How would you assess the utility of evaluation recommendations from FAO's Evaluation Office?

Are evaluation recommendations:	Very much	Much	Medium	Little	Very little
Clearly formulated?					
Relevant?					
Targeted to relevant decision-makers?					
Actionable for implementation?					

Please comment:

6. To what extent have you found useful lessons learned from OED evaluations?

To what extent have you found useful lessons learned from OED evaluations?	Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
Use of lessons learned					

If affirmative, please explain with an example and how lessons learned were disseminated .

7. Was the evaluation undertaken in a timely manner to inform decision-making?

	Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
Timeliness of evaluations					

Please explain why.

8. When planning or reviewing an intervention, do you consult FAO evaluation products?

	Very much	Much	Medium	Little	Very little
Consultation of FAO evaluation products:					
Evaluation reports					
Lessons learned/best practices					

If affirmative, how do you know if FAO evaluation products are available?

9. If any, which measures could OED take to improve its work?

Evaluation of FAO's Ev. Function: **Questionnaire for senior OED staff**

A. Personal information

1. What is your position in your organization?

Your position	Please tick
Senior management (D1 or D2)	
Mid-level management (P4 or 5)	
Junior position (P1,2,3)	
Administrative position	

2. As a OED staff or consultant, in how many evaluations have you been involved with FAO's Evaluation Office (OED) since 2010?

Number of FAO evaluations involved	Please tick
1	
2	
3 to 5	
5 to 10	
More than 10	

3. When have you joined FAO's Evaluation Office (OED)/ as a consultant, when have you first evaluated for OED?

First year of engagement with OED	Please tick
Before 2010	
2010	
2011	
2012	
2013	
2014	
2015	
2016	

B. Your experience with evaluations undertaken by FAO's Evaluation Office (OED): Set up of the function

4. To what extent OED's budget and staff are sufficient to accomplish its workplan targets and to comply with its mandate?

	Very much	Much	Medium	Little	Very little
<i>OED budget</i>					
To what extent is OED's budget is sufficient to undertake your evaluations with sufficient quality?					
<i>OED staff</i>					
To what extent has OED sufficient staff to enable you to undertake your evaluations with sufficient quality?					
To what extent has OED has sufficient senior level staff to ensure the supervision of more junior level staff?					
To what extent has OED has sufficient junior and mid-level staff?					
To what extent does OED staff benefits from regular capacity building?					

5. To what extent is OED's headquarter-based operating model (with OED-led evaluations supported by national consultants and international technical experts) cost-effective?

	Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
Cost-effectiveness of OED's current operational model					
<i>Other potential models:</i>	<i>Please assess cost-effectiveness other potential models</i>				
Current model but stronger role of international technical experts in leading evaluations					
Centralized evaluation function outsourcing some evaluations to specialized service providers, with OED in charge of management and quality control					
Any other model?					

Please explain your assessment:

6. To what extent do OED evaluations address the following cross cutting issues?

	Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
Contribution to national capacity building					
Inclusion of a gender perspective into evaluation					
Inclusion of a human rights perspective into evaluation					

7. Please explain your assessment with a specific example:

8. To what extent is the current set-up of OED effective?

	Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
<i>To what extent have evaluations you have been involved resulted in:</i>					
Contributing to better results of FAO's work					
Contributing to the development effectiveness in Member Countries					
Enhancing the process of learning from experience					
Making FAO accountable					

Please explain why?

9. To what extent and in which ways has FAO's evaluation function (OED) evolved since 2010?

	Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
Enhanced engagement of key stakeholders (Partners in country, FAO senior management and governing body)					
Involvement of OED staff in leading evaluations					
Training and recruitment of staff					
Enhanced ownership of evaluations					
Move to a results focus					
Move from project type evaluations to higher-level evaluations					
Sound evidence of evaluations					
Changes in the robustness of methodology					
Process for developing the work program/evaluation agenda					
Any other ways: please specify					

Please explain your assessment with specific examples:

10. a) To what extent is OED an independent unit? If possible, please make an assessment for the period 2010 to 2013 (pre-reform agenda).

	Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
<i>Independence of OED 2010 to 2013 (pre-reform agenda)</i>					
In terms of its location within the organization					
With respect to its behaviour (is OED unbiased in its approach to its work?)					
As can be judged from its products (are reports fair and hard-hitting?)					
In terms of its governance structure					
With regard to protection from outside influences					
Concerning conflicts of interest (do evaluators evaluate projects, programs or activities in which they took part?)					

10 b) To what extent is OED an independent unit? If possible, please make an assessment for the period from 2014 onwards when OED implemented its reform agenda.

Assessment criteria	Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
<i>Independence of OED from 2014 onwards</i>					
In terms of its location within the organization					
With respect to its behaviour (is OED unbiased in its approach to its work?)					
As can be judged from its products (are reports fair and hard-hitting?)					
In terms of its governance structure					
With regard to protection from outside influences					
Concerning conflicts of interest (do evaluators evaluate projects, programs or activities in which they took part?)					

11. To what extent is the system of evaluation currently set up responding to the needs of evaluations, in particular those requested by programme managers or resource partners, including decentralized FAO operations?

	Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
To what extent do my evaluations meet a need of clients?					

Please explain your assessment with specific examples:

12. What are the roles and responsibilities, if any, of OED in result-based management and the creation of an evaluation culture to respond to demands from clients in HQ and the field?

	Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
OED's roles and responsibilities for RBM in FAO					
OED's roles and responsibilities for creating an evaluation culture					

Please explain your assessment:

C. Your experience with evaluation practice in FAO's Evaluation Office (OED)

13. To what extent do OED evaluations allow for comparability (e.g. FAO's thematic results over time or results across countries or regions) and aggregation of evaluation results?

	Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
Comparability and aggregation of evaluation results (e.g. by region, year, evaluation type)					

14. To what extent are lessons learned from OED evaluations used in interventions or other OED evaluations ?

	Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
Use of lessons learned					

If affirmative, please explain with an example and how this was disseminated .

15. Was the evaluation undertaken in a timely manner to inform decision-making?

	Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
Timeliness of evaluations					

If timely or un-timely, please explain why.

If timeliness was a problem, how could it be improved in the future?

16. To what extent is auto-evaluation (or self-evaluation) practiced at FAO and which role, if any, OED plays (and has played) with respect to auto-evaluations?

17. If any, which measures could OED take to improve its work?

Evaluation of FAO's Ev. Function: **Survey for OED staff** (to allow to be anonymous; can also be used as questionnaire for interviews)

A. Personal information

1. What is your position in your organization?

Your position	Please tick
Senior management (D1 or D2)	
Mid-level management (P4 or 5)	
Junior position (P1,2,3)	
Administrative position	

2. As a OED staff or consultant, in how many evaluations have you been involved with FAO's Evaluation Office (OED) since 2010?

Number of FAO evaluations involved	Please tick
1	
2	
3 to 5	
5 to 10	
More than 10	

3. When have you joined FAO's Evaluation Office (OED)/ as a consultant, when have you first evaluated for OED?

First year of engagement with OED	Please tick
Before 2010	
2010	
2011	
2012	
2013	
2014	
2015	
2016	

B. Your experience with evaluations undertaken by FAO's Evaluation Office (OED): Set up of the function

4. To what extent OED's budget and staff are sufficient to accomplish its workplan targets and to comply with its mandate?

	Very much	Much	Medium	Little	Very little
<i>OED budget</i>					
To what extent is OED's budget is sufficient to undertake your evaluations with sufficient quality?					
<i>OED staff</i>					
To what extent has OED sufficient staff to enable you to undertake your evaluations with sufficient quality?					
To what extent has OED has sufficient senior level staff to ensure the supervision of more junior level staff?					
To what extent has OED has sufficient junior and mid-level staff?					
To what extent does OED staff benefits from regular capacity building?					

5. To what extent do OED evaluations address the following cross cutting issues?

	Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
Contribution to national capacity building					
Inclusion of a gender perspective into evaluation					
Inclusion of a human rights perspective into evaluation					

Please explain your assessment with a specific example:

6. To what extent is the current set-up of OED effective?

	Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
<i>To what extent have evaluations you have been involved resulted in:</i>					
Contributing to better results of FAO's work					
Contributing to the development effectiveness in Member countries					
Enhancing the process of learning from experience					
Making FAO accountable					

Please explain why?

7. To what extent is OED an independent unit? If possible, please make an assessment for the period from 2014 onwards when OED implemented its reform agenda.

	Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
<i>Independence of OED from 2014 onwards</i>					
In terms of its location within the organization					
With respect to its behaviour (is OED unbiased in its approach to its work?)					
As can be judged from its products (are reports fair and hard-hitting?)					
In terms of its governance structure					
With regard to protection from outside influences					

Concerning conflicts of interest (do evaluators evaluate projects, programs or activities in which they took part?)					
---	--	--	--	--	--

8. To what extent is the system of evaluation currently set up responding to the needs of evaluations, in particular those requested by programme managers or resource partners, including decentralized FAO operations?

	Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
To what extent do my evaluations meet a need of clients?					

Please explain your assessment with specific examples:

9. What are the roles and responsibilities, if any, of OED in result-based management and the creation of an evaluation culture to respond to demands from clients in HQ and the field?

	Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
OED's roles and responsibilities for RBM in FAO					
OED's roles and responsibilities for creating an evaluation culture					

Please explain your assessment:

C. Your experience with evaluation practice in FAO's Evaluation Office (OED)

10. To what extent do OED evaluations allow for comparability (e.g. FAO's thematic results over time or results across countries or regions) and aggregation of evaluation results?

	Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low

Comparability and aggregation of evaluation results (e.g. by region, year, evaluation type)					
---	--	--	--	--	--

11. To what extent are lessons learned from OED evaluations used in interventions or other OED evaluations ?

	Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
Use of lessons learned					

If affirmative, please explain with an example and how this was disseminated .

12. Was the evaluation undertaken in a timely manner to inform decision-making?

	Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
Timeliness of evaluations					

If timely or un-timely, please explain why.

If timeliness was a problem, how could it be improved in the future?

13. If any, which measures could OED take to improve its work?

Evaluation of FAO's Evaluation Function – interview questions *for external evaluators*

General information

1. In how many evaluations have you been involved with FAO's Evaluation Office (OED) since 2010?

Number of FAO evaluations involved	Please tick
1	
2	
3 to 5	
5 to 10	
More than 10	

2. When have you worked for OED as an evaluation consultant?

First year of engagement with OED	Please tick
Before 2010	
2010	
2011	
2012	
2013	
2014	
2015	
2016	

3. How many years of professional evaluation experience do you have?

Professional evaluation experience	Please tick
1 to 5 years	
5 to 10 years	
10 to 15 years	

15 to 20 years	
Over 20 years	

4. How many years of professional NON-evaluation experience do you have?

Professional evaluation experience	Please tick
1 to 5 years	
5 to 10 years	
10 to 15 years	
15 to 20 years	
Over 20 years	

5. Do you have a degree in evaluation or undergone professional training in evaluation?

Level of professionalization in evaluation	Please tick
Degree in Evaluation	
Training course of 6 months or longer	
Series of training modules	
Training workshop(s)	
No evaluation specific training	

6. To what extent were the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation you led presented in the final evaluation report?

7. To what degree do you consider that OED is independent?

8. Do you have any view(s) on how OED could improve its practice?

If any, which measures could OED take to improve its work?

Annex 2: Mapping of respondents



For each type of respondent the specific instrument that the evaluation team will use is indicated in Annex 1.

Annex 3: Template for assessing evaluation reports

		RATING*	RATING*
Evaluation Title:			
1. The Report Structure			
1.0	The report is well structured, logical, clear and complete.		
1.1	Report is logically structured with clarity and coherence (e.g. background and objectives are presented before findings, and findings are presented before conclusions and recommendations).		
1.2	The title page and opening pages provide key basic information . 1. Name of the evaluation object 2. Timeframe of the evaluation and date of the report 3. Locations (country, region, etc.) of the evaluation object 4. Names and/or organizations of evaluators 5. Name of the organization commissioning the evaluation 6. Table of contents which also lists Tables, Graphs, Figures and Annexes		

7. List of acronyms

1.3 The **Executive Summary** is a stand-alone section of 2-3 pages that includes:

1. Overview of the evaluation object
2. Evaluation objectives and intended audience

3. Evaluation methodology

4. Most important findings and conclusions

5. Main recommendations

2

1.4	<p>Annexes increase the credibility of the evaluation report. They may include, inter alia:²</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. TORs 2. List of persons interviewed and sites visited 3. List of documents consulted 	
	4. More details on the methodology, such as data collection instruments, including details of their reliability and validity	
	5. Evaluators biodata and/or justification of team composition	
	6. Evaluation matrix	
	7. Results framework	
2. Object of Evaluation		RATING*
2.0	The report presents a clear and full description of the 'object' of the evaluation ³	
2.1	The logic model and/or the expected results chain (inputs, outputs and outcomes) of the object is clearly described.	
2.2	The context of key social, political, economic, demographic, and institutional factors that have a direct bearing on the object is	

described. For example, the partner government's strategies and priorities, international, regional or country development goals,

strategies and frameworks, the concerned agency's corporate goals and priorities, as appropriate.

2.3 The scale and complexity of the object of the evaluation are clearly described, for example:

- **The number of components**, if more than one, and the size of the population each component is intended to serve, either directly and indirectly.

- **The geographic context and boundaries** (such as the region, country, and/or landscape and challenges where relevant)
- The purpose and goal, and organization/management of the object
- The **total resources** from all sources, including human resources and budget(s) (e.g. concerned agency, partner government and other donor contributions).

3 The “object” of the evaluation is the intervention (outcome, programme, project, group of projects, themes, soft assistance) that is (are) the focus of the evaluation and evaluation results presented in the report.

2.4	The key stakeholders involved in the object implementation, including the implementing agency(s) and partners, other key stakeholders and their roles.	
2.5	The report identifies the implementation status of the object , including its phase of implementation and any significant changes (e.g. plans, strategies, logical frameworks) that have occurred over time and explains the implications of those changes for the evaluation.	
3. Evaluation Purpose, Objective(s) and Scope.		RATING*
3.0	The evaluation's purpose, objectives and scope are fully explained	
3.1	The purpose of the evaluation is clearly defined, including why the evaluation was needed at that point in time, who needed the information, what information is needed, how the information will be used.	
3.2	The report should provide a clear explanation of the evaluation objectives and scope including main evaluation questions and describes and justifies what the evaluation did and did not cover.	
3.3	The report describes and provides an explanation of the chosen evaluation criteria, performance standards, or other criteria used by the evaluators.	
3.4	As appropriate, evaluation objectives and scope include questions that address issues of gender and human rights.	
4. Evaluation Methodology		RATING*

4.0 The report presents transparent description of the methodology applied to the evaluation that clearly explains how the evaluation was specifically designed to address the evaluation criteria, yield answers to the evaluation questions and achieve evaluation purposes.

4.1 The report describes the **data collection methods and analysis**, the rationale for selecting them, and their limitations. Reference indicators and benchmarks are included where relevant.

- 4.2 The report describes the **data sources**, the rationale for their selection, and their limitations. The report includes discussion of how the mix of data sources was used to obtain a diversity of perspectives, ensure data accuracy and overcome data limits.

4.3	The report describes the sampling frame – area and population to be represented, rationale for selection, mechanics of selection, numbers selected out of potential subjects, and limitations of the sample.	
4.4	The evaluation report gives a complete description of stakeholder’s consultation process in the evaluation, including the rationale for selecting the particular level and activities for consultation.	
4.5	The methods employed are appropriate for the evaluation and to answer its questions.	
4.6	The methods employed are appropriate for analysing gender and rights issues identified in the evaluation scope.	
4.7	The report presents evidence that adequate measures were taken to ensure data quality, including evidence supporting the reliability and validity of data collection tools (e.g. interview protocols, observation tools, etc.)	
5. Findings		RATING*
5.0	Findings respond directly to the evaluation criteria and questions detailed in the scope and objectives section of the report and are based on evidence derived from data collection and analysis methods described in the methodology section of the report.	
5.1	Reported findings reflect systematic and appropriate analysis and interpretation of the data.	
5.2	Reported findings address the evaluation criteria (such as efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, impact and relevance) and questions defined in the evaluation scope.	
5.3	Findings are objectively reported based on the evidence.	
5.4	Gaps and limitations in the data and/or unanticipated findings are reported and discussed.	
5.5	Reasons for accomplishments and failures , especially continuing constraints, were identified as much as possible	

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6. Conclusions

RATING*

- 6.0 Conclusions present reasonable judgments based on findings and substantiated by evidence, and provide insights pertinent to the object and purpose of the evaluation.
- 6.1 The conclusions reflect reasonable evaluative judgments relating to key evaluation questions.
- 6.2 Conclusions are well substantiated by the evidence presented and are logically connected to evaluation findings.

6.3	Stated conclusions provide insights into the identification and/or solutions of important problems or issues pertinent to the prospective decisions and actions of evaluation users.	
6.4	Conclusions present strengths and weaknesses of the object (policy, programmes, project's or other intervention) being evaluated, based on the evidence presented and taking due account of the views of a diverse cross-section of stakeholders.	
7. Recommendations		RATING*
7.0	Recommendations are relevant to the object and purposes of the evaluation, are supported by evidence and conclusions, and were developed with the involvement of relevant stakeholders.	
7.1	The report describes the process followed in developing the recommendations including consultation with stakeholders	
7.2	Recommendations are firmly based on evidence and conclusions	
7.3	Recommendations are relevant to the object and purposes of the evaluation	
7.4	Recommendations clearly identify the target group for each recommendation	
7.5	Recommendations are clearly stated with priorities for action made clear.	
7.6	Recommendations are actionable and reflect an understanding of the commissioning organization and potential constraints to follow up.	
8. Gender and Human Rights		RATING*
8.0	The report illustrates the extent to which the design and implementation of the object, the assessment of results and the evaluation process incorporate a gender equality perspective and human rights based approach	
8.1	The report uses gender sensitive and human rights-based language throughout, including data disaggregated by sex, age, disability, etc.	

8.2 The evaluation approach and data collection and analysis methods are gender equality and human rights responsive and appropriate for

analyzing the gender equality and human rights issues identified in the scope.

- 8.3 The report assesses if the design of the object was based on a sound gender analysis and human rights analysis and implementation for results was monitored through gender and human rights frameworks, as well as the actual results on gender equality and human rights.
- 8.4 Reported findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons provide adequate information on gender equality and human rights aspects.

9.Positioning for Use**Rating****9.1 Knowledge accessibility and sharing:****9.2 Timeliness:****9.3 Actionability:**

POSITIONING FOR USE— Considers the extent to which the evaluation process has been managed, and evaluation products/ outputs prepared in such a way that the probability of use, influence and impact is enhanced.. Preparing for evaluation use requires attention to user contexts, accessibility of products, and ‘fit for purpose’ engagement and dissemination strategies. It also requires careful consideration of relationships to establish before and/or during the evaluation process, and the best platforms for making evaluation outputs available to given targeted audiences and users. Positioning for use calls for strategies to integrate potential users into the evaluation process itself wherever this is feasible and desirable. Subdimensions include knowledge accessibility and sharing, actionability, and timeliness.

Each evaluation report will be assessed against the quality criteria using a four point rating scale. Evidence that justifies why a particular rating was given will be included in an additional annex.

Rating	Score	Quality
Very Poor	0	Quality very deficient in important respects
Poor	1	Quality deficient in some respects
Good	2	Satisfactory quality
Very good	3	Very satisfactory quality

Annex 4: Evaluation matrix

Annex 4: Evaluation matrix

<i>Key evaluation question and criteria</i>	Sub question	Data collection method	Data sources
<i>(a) Relevance, credibility and usefulness of evaluations</i>			
1. To what extent FAO's evaluations respond to the needs of FAO's internal and external stakeholders and are being used ?	<p>1.1 To what extent are OED evaluations used? By whom? For what purpose(s)? How do evaluations respond to the needs of OED's clients in a) FAO Senior management and technical functions in HQ, b) FAO decentralised functions; c) FAO Council/ Programme Committee; d) in Member Countries? Which were the result of the use? (Examples, specific evaluation)</p> <p>1.2 To what extent are stakeholders involved in the evaluation process to create ownership and facilitate the use of evaluation results?</p> <p>1.3 To what extent are good practices used in OED evaluations?</p> <p>1.4 To what extent does the targeting of evaluations and its recommendations facilitate the utility of OED evaluations?</p> <p>1.5 To what extent are lessons learnt from OED evaluations applied in FAO? How are they disseminated? (Examples, specific evaluation).</p> <p>1.6 How timely are OED evaluation reports to support the decision-making process in FAO and among its external stakeholders? If required, how could timeliness be improved?</p> <p>1.7 To what extent is the work done by OED appropriately disseminated within a) FAO; b) to Member Countries; c) to the development community?</p>	<p>Document review,</p> <p>Key stakeholder interviews; Focus group interviews with clients in FAO (both using semi-standardized questionnaire);</p> <p>Survey to evaluation stakeholders;</p> <p>Mapping of evaluation reports;</p> <p>Analysis of follow-up reports, assessing them in light of UNEG's Good Practice Standards for Evaluation Follow-up; Assessment of</p>	<p>FAO evaluation reports; OED evaluation database; OED website statistics; OED clients in HQ, at regional, sub-regional and country level; OED staff, External evaluation consultants, Programme Committee, FAO (internal) Evaluation Committee;</p> <p>Other FAO Managers and Staff tbd</p>

	<p>1.8 How meaningful and cost-effective are a) the processes and actions taken by FAO's management in response to the findings and recommendations from OED's reports? b) the tracking of implementation of evaluation recommendations</p> <p>1.9 How is the biannual evaluation plan prepared and adopted? To what extent are the needs of internal and external stakeholders considered in this process? If required, how could this process be improved</p>	OED recent evaluation reports using the DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluation.	
<i>b) Appropriateness and effectiveness of evaluation function</i>			
<p>2. To what extent is the current set up of the evaluation function – including its mandate, structure, responsibilities and processes – appropriate and effective in responding to the evolving needs of the Organization and its Member Countries?</p>	<p>2.1 To what extent is OED an independent unit?</p> <p>(a) in terms of its location within the organization (b) with respect to its behaviour (is OED unbiased in its approach to its work?) (c) as can be judged from its products (are reports fair and hard-hitting?) (d) in terms of its governance structure (e) with regard to protection from outside influences (f) concerning conflicts of interest (do evaluators evaluate projects, programs or activities in which they took part?)</p> <p>2.2 To what extent FAO's evaluation policy is consistent with international standards, and with other relevant policies and frameworks within FAO (including its RBM⁴¹ framework) and outside FAO (e.g. UNEG norms and standards)?</p> <p>2.3 How far the policy sets out clear functional and organizational arrangements to ensure that evaluation contributes effectively to learning, accountability and</p>	<p>Document review, Including review of terms of reference;</p> <p>Key stakeholder interviews using semi-standardized questionnaire;</p> <p>Comparative analyses of RBM/evaluation functions, policies and capacities in the UN community;</p>	<p>OED evaluation charter;</p> <p>UNEG Norms and Standards;</p> <p>QCPR⁴² resolution; Evaluation policies of other specialized UN agencies; OED clients in HQ, at regional, sub-regional and country level; OED staff, External evaluation consultants,</p>

⁴¹ Results-based Management

⁴² Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review

	<p>performance improvement within FAO at all levels?</p> <p>2.4 To what extent is the system of evaluation currently set up responding to the needs of FAO, in particular those of programme managers including decentralized FAO operations?</p> <p>2.5 To what extent OED evaluations allow for comparability (e.g. FAO's thematic results over time or results across countries or regions) and aggregation of evaluation results?</p> <p>2.6 What are the roles and responsibilities, if any, of OED in result-based management?</p> <p>2.7 To what extent auto evaluation (or self-evaluation) is practiced at FAO and which role, if any, OED plays (and has played) with respect to auto evaluations?</p> <p>2.7 To what extent is the current set-up of OED effective in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) contributing to better results of FAO's work? (b) contributing to the development effectiveness in Member Countries? (c) enhancing the process of learning from experience, including through contributions to FAO's knowledge management ? (d) making FAO accountable? 	<p>Contextual analysis of key internal and external developments. Review of OED's and FAO's corporate websites (the latter only with respect to its treatment of evaluation).</p>	<p>Programme Committee, FAO Council; FAO (internal) Evaluation Committee</p>
<p><i>c) Enabling environment</i></p>			
<p><i>3. To what extent is OED enabled to achieve its reform agenda?</i></p>	<p>3.1. How adequate are FAO's evaluation/ FAO's evaluation charter with regard to: (a) mandate, (b) structure, (c) responsibilities, (d) processes ;</p> <p>3.2 To what extent does it take into account FAO's decentralization, with its opportunities and challenges?</p> <p>3.3 To what extent OED's budget and staff are sufficient to accomplish its workplan targets and to comply with its mandate?</p>	<p>Document review,</p> <p>Key stakeholder interviews using semi-standardized questionnaire;</p> <p>Comparative analyses of RBM/evaluation</p>	<p>OED evaluation charter; OED budget, UNEG Norms and Standards;</p> <p>Evaluation policies of other specialized UN agencies; OED clients in HQ, at</p>

	<p>3.4 To what extent is OED's HQ-based operating model (with OED led evaluations supported by national consultants and international technical experts) cost-effective?</p> <p>3.5 To what extent does FAO leadership and governance provide support to evaluations and their use?</p>	<p>functions, policies and capacities in the UN community; Contextual analysis of key internal and external developments;</p>	<p>regional, sub-regional and country level; OED staff, Reports of the meetings of the Programme Committee, FAO Council; FAO (internal) Evaluation Committee.</p>
<p><i>d) Efficiency and synergies within the context of oversight functions:</i></p>			
<p>4. To what extent is the evaluation function placed in the context of all oversight functions of the Organization with due coordination, avoiding duplication of efforts, making efficient use of resources and achieving efficiency</p>	<p>4.1 To what extent are evaluation and audit complementary or overlapping?</p> <p>4.2 How is operating the working relationship between OED and the Programme Committee and to what extent the mandate of the PC is compatible with changes in the way it is operating vis-à-vis OED'?</p> <p>4.3 To what extent does OED uses partnerships that enable it to implement better its mandate (particularly in the context of the Delivering-as-one-UN approach in countries), and as a source of supplementary funding?</p> <p>4.4 To what extent do OED evaluations address the issue of national capacity building (<i>with the ultimate aim to create a larger pool of qualified national consultants to choose from for FAO and partners</i>)?</p>	<p>Document review,</p> <p>Key stakeholder interviews using semi-standardized questionnaire;</p> <p>Comparative analyses of RBM/evaluation functions, policies and capacities in the UN community; Contextual analysis of key internal and external</p>	<p>OED evaluation charter; OED budget, UNEG Norms and Standards;</p> <p>Evaluation policies of other specialized UN agencies; OED clients in HQ, at regional, sub-regional and country level; OED staff, Reports of the meetings of the Programme Committee, FAO Council; FAO</p>

gains?		developments;	(internal) Evaluation Committee.
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Detailed evaluation matrix

(attached Excel file)

Annex 5: Correspondence between findings (chapter 2 and 3), conclusions and recommendations (chapter 4)

Key findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
<p><i>Usefulness of evaluations</i></p> <p>186. The overall utility of OED evaluations is perceived as medium by evaluation stakeholders and FAO Member Countries, with use for policy formulation/revision in FAO and informing Member Countries' decision making</p>	<p>OED has become more aligned with FAO's strategic approach, it made progress in systematizing its practice in guidelines, it is implementing a training/learning programme for its staff, it is starting to implement a communication plan for a better dissemination of its evaluations, and it is an active participant in the UN evaluation group.</p>	<p>1. <i>A strategy and an action plan for enhancing learning and accountability to be implemented by OED by June 2017. Recommendation address to OED's Director.</i></p> <p>187. This plan should include This plan should include i) addressing human resource issues, mainly on the imbalance between junior level staff on the one hand and mid and senior level staff on the other hand through hiring more senior staff with sound evaluation expertise, and clarifying OED staff roles and responsibilities in OED (including mentoring) relating them to the respective staff ii) grade a rating system to be applied in all (or most) evaluations so as to be able to make comparisons across sectors/areas/organizations, and to aggregate results; iii) an annual report that should be flagship presenting evaluation results (not just summaries of evaluations), with ratings for the different types of</p>
<p><i>Dissemination</i></p> <p>188. Although progress has been made recently, there is significant scope for enhancing the dissemination of OED evaluations, both within and outside FAO, to Member Countries and to the development community</p>		
<p><i>Relevance</i></p> <p>189. OED evaluations meet clients needs to a medium extent to inform about project/programme results, possible improvements and decision making, as experienced by evaluation stakeholders, with higher appreciation by Member Countries</p>	<p>There are limitations in the relevance of OED's evaluations and recommendations and the timeliness of its evaluations, which affects the overall utility of evaluations in FAO. OED meets the needs of FAO Member Countries to a higher degree than those of evaluation stakeholders in FAO's HQ and country offices, of implementation partners and partner governments. The timeliness of OED evaluations is a key factor affecting the relevance of evaluation results, with Member Countries showing higher satisfaction than evaluation stakeholders. Clients of OED evaluations are largely satisfied with OED recommendations while actionable formulations could be further strengthened.</p>	
<p><i>Timeliness</i></p> <p>190. Overall Member Countries show satisfaction with the timeliness of OED evaluations while evaluation stakeholders are more critical.</p>		
<p><i>OED evaluation recommendations</i></p> <p>191. Users of OED evaluation recommendations, evaluation stakeholders and FAO Member Countries</p>		

<p>perceive OED recommendations as useful to very useful. Recommendations' relevance is best rated while the formulation of recommendations is less actionable for implementation.</p>		
<p><i>Relevance of the evaluation function</i></p> <p>192. Relevance of the evaluation function has been enhanced by including evaluations of the strategic objectives into OED's workplan; shortcomings exist in communication, skills set of internal and external evaluators and reporting on evaluation follow-up</p>	<p>The use of evaluations for decision making and accountability has room for improvements. Two of the areas that show shortcomings are the insufficient use of quantitative data and ratings in OED evaluations and the lack of comparability and aggregation of evaluation results, unlike what is done by other UN organizations evaluation offices (such as IFAD).</p>	<p>evaluations and by regions, and with cross-cutting analysis, systemic or transversal issues and an assessment of the implementation of evaluation recommendations; iv) internal and/or external quality assurance and enhancement of OED evaluations at two stages of the evaluation process: at the stage of presenting data collection tools and at the stage of draft reporting; the external quality assurance could be implemented either through outsourcing or through reciprocal peer reviews with WFP and IFAD's evaluation offices, an option that has the additional benefit of sharing knowledge among the RBA without incrementing costs;v) request to use data collection tools in TOR that allow for capturing quantitative data from interviews and surveys vi) evaluation executive summaries not exceeding 4 pages; vii) inclusion of literature reviews in evaluation reports; viii) compliance with UNEG Quality Checklist (which includes specific quality criteria for</p>
<p><i>OED's Contribution to Learning and Accountability</i></p> <p>The current set-up of OED is making a contribution to better results of FAO's work, but is limited by OED's evaluation coverage, the limited use of OED evaluations and the lack of a systematic use of ratings;</p> <p>Another factor that limits OED's contribution to learning and accountability is that evaluation results are neither compared nor aggregated.</p>		
<p><i>Quality of OED evaluations</i></p> <p>193. Quality for the 21 selected OED evaluation reports is uneven across the different evaluation types, with an average of medium to good; best quality in the case of joint evaluations;</p>	<p>Despite sufficient evaluation budgets, the quality of OED evaluations is uneven. Shortcomings in the evaluation methodology and the very limited consideration of gender and human rights are of particular concern. As is the fact that quality of evaluation reports is highest in joint evaluations, in</p>	

<p>194. Project and thematic/reliance evaluations are slightly below the average, with the latter having an up to ten times higher budget;</p> <p>195. Evaluations are in average strongest on the quality criteria of the report structure and the description of the evaluation object, while lowest quality for gender and human rights, followed by recommendations, the positioning of use and evaluation methodology</p>	<p>which OED applies a joint evaluation approach rather than its own. The quality of OED evaluations is also affected by a misbalance between a larger group of junior staff with insufficient mid level and senior level staff. Combined with an increasing OED evaluation portfolio and fluent roles and responsibilities of OED staff regardless the staff grade, staff capacities get overstretched.</p>	<p>gender and human rights) for evaluation reports, incorporating them as an annex to the TOR for OED evaluations; s; ix) elaboration of policy briefs, transversal reports, and just-in-time reports (e.g. prior to development of a new policy) and x) performance indicators and benchmarks for the new OED strategy and action plan.</p>
<p><i>External evaluation team leaders</i></p> <p>196. OED used a wide group of consultants to lead teams rather than relying on a small pool of regular team leaders</p> <p>197. The number of years of professional experience of external evaluation team leaders is largely unrelated to the quality of evaluation reports in FAO</p> <p>198. Specific set of skills unique to evaluation that are required to deliver a quality evaluation product seem not fully unleashed by OED's selection of external evaluation team leaders</p>		<p>This recommendation would contribute to the achievement of Results 1 & 2 in the Theory of Change presented in Chapter 2.</p>
<p><i>OED budget and staff sufficiency</i></p> <p>199. There is sufficient budget for evaluations, except for some cases of project evaluations;</p>		

<p>200. Bringing down the costs of OED evaluations results in OED producing an increasing amount of evaluations which risks jeopardizing the quality of evaluations;</p> <p>201. OED has sufficient junior level staff/consultants but less so at medium and senior level.</p>		
<p><i>Definition of roles and responsibilities in OED</i></p> <p>202. Lack of clear definitions of roles and responsibilities in OED, particularly for junior staff</p>		
<p><i>Cross cutting issues</i></p> <p>203. The inclusion of a gender perspective into OED evaluation is medium, despite being systematically addressed in evaluations' ToR;</p> <p>204. With very few exceptions OED evaluations neglect a human-rights perspective.</p>		
<p><i>Independence of the Evaluation Function</i></p> <p>205. OED complies with what is established in the Charter concerning evaluation independence, except with respect to the budget;</p> <p>206. In terms of its location within the organization to a great extent OED is an independent unit; it is not fully independent because of the second reporting line to the DG;</p>	<p><i>The independence of OED is limited, particularly its behavioural independence, whereas its organizational independence is affected by design and due to a set of practices.</i></p> <p>OED staff perceived that they are not sufficiently protected from outside influences, thus influencing OED's behavioural independence. With respect to organizational independence, the reporting line to the DG, although it has not influenced the</p>	<p><i>2. To strengthen OED's independence, a) OED's Director should ensure that OED staff perceive that they are protected from outside influence, b)) the independence of OED should be strengthened and adequately protected (eliminating limitations in the travel of OED Director related to the evaluation function, and allowing OED Director to</i></p>

<p>207. Behavioural and Organizational evaluation independence are limited.</p>	<p>performance of OED, it imposes a structural limit to its independence. Furthermore, OED's role as secretary of FAO's Management (internal) Evaluation Committee affects the perception of independence of OED. Last and not least, conducting both mid-term and final evaluations of projects or programmes jeopardizes OED's independence (as it would be assessing its own recommendations) and absorbs resources which could be deployed more strategically.</p>	<p><i>recruit regular budget staff);c) OED's Director should not be the Secretary of the Evaluation Committee and d) OED should not conduct mid-term evaluations</i></p> <p>This recommendation would contribute to the achievement of Result 1 in the Theory of Change presented in Chapter 2.</p>
<p><i>Enabling environment for the evaluation function</i> The OED Director is periodically engaged with senior FAO management for information sharing and attempts to promoting an evaluation culture;</p> <p>208. OED operates in an "evaluation silo", given an outdated Evaluation Charter, which also affects evaluations in an increasingly decentralized operational setting (see key findings on the Evaluation Charter).</p> <p><i>FAO's Evaluation Policy and OED's Reform Agenda</i></p> <p>209. The Charter does not address "auto-evaluation" nor decentralized evaluations (and does not even considered the role that FAO Office of Evaluation could or should play with respect to "auto-evaluation" or decentralized evaluations). The Charter therefore is not a comprehensive evaluation policy (which was mandated by the IPA).</p> <p>210. The lack of auto-evaluations/decentralized evaluations is a major gap in FAO's evaluation function,</p>	<p>FAO has been strongly increasing the decentralization of its operations but the evaluation function is fully centralized. Auto-evaluations that were done in the past, and whose potential contribution was considered by the IPA, have been discontinued. Decentralized evaluations are not conducted. This gap in FAO's evaluation function deprives the Organization of an important source of learning, it limits the coverage of operations that are evaluated and does not enable OED to validate auto/decentralized evaluations, which not only can enhance the quality of these evaluations but it can also lighten the burden of OED, allowing it to expand its data base of evaluations and therefore enhancing its contribution to learning and accountability.</p>	<p><i>3. FAO should develop a programme of decentralized evaluations, including mid-term evaluations, through its Regional Offices, funded with a proportion of trust funds for evaluation; this recommendation is addressed to FAO's Management (namely TCD and DDO, in consultation with the Evaluation Committee and the ODG) with the support of OED, and could be implemented by September 2017.</i></p> <p>Through a programme of decentralized evaluations FAO will strengthen the evaluation function, complementing the independent evaluation (for which OED is responsible) with evaluations conducted by regional or country offices, endowed with a budget for this purpose, which could use a proportion</p>

<p>given the importance of decentralization for the implementation of its operations and also in terms of good evaluation practices.</p>		<p>of the trust funds for evaluation (the remaining funds to be allocated to OED). The methodology to be employed in conducting decentralized/auto-evaluations should be harmonized with OED's methodology. To support this programme OED could cooperate in developing the approach, enhancing capacities (as indicated in Recommendation 5) and eventually outposting OED staff once OED has addressed its human resources issues, and through internal evaluation capacity building).</p> <p>This recommendation would contribute to the achievement of Result 2 in the Theory of Change presented in Chapter 2.</p>
<p><i>Evaluation planning</i></p> <p>211. For the biannual evaluation plan FAO management plays a more active role than the PC, which is unclear on the rationale for conducting some of the evaluations submitted to the Committee</p>	<p>The rotation of PC members and their limited participation in the process of developing OED's work programme has resulted in PC members not being fully informed on the reasons why some evaluations were conducted by OED. This communication gap affected the PC use of evaluations and therefore the contribution that evaluations can make to FAO's and Member Countries learning and FAO's accountability.</p>	<p>4. OED should develop its work programme with participation of the PC, and when evaluations are submitted for discussions at PC meetings there should be clear explanation of the reasons why the evaluation was conducted. This recommendation should be implemented by OED during the first semester of 2017. This recommendation would contribute to the achievement of Result 3 in the</p>

		Theory of Change presented in Chapter 2.
<p><i>Cross cutting issues</i></p> <p>212. National evaluation capacity building is not within OED's mandate and neither financial or human resources are allocated for this purpose</p>	<p>The contribution of OED to evaluation capacity development of Member Countries and/or to FAO has been marginal. OED has neither dedicated funds nor a clear mandate for evaluation capacity development.</p>	<p><i>5. OED could include in its work-programme an internal and external evaluation capacity development (ECD) initiative, for which it could mobilize donor funds and establish partnership agreements. To be implemented by OED by September 2017.</i></p> <p>The ECD initiative could be designed and/or implemented jointly with the evaluation offices of the other UN Rome based agencies, organizing joint ECD activities in Member Countries. These activities could also involve staff from FAO's Regional and Country Offices, strengthening their capacities to manage, supervise and/or conduct decentralized/auto-evaluations. This recommendation would also require an adjustment of the Evaluation Charter, which is the next and last recommendation. This recommendation would contribute to the achievement of Result 3 in the Theory of Change presented in Chapter 2.</p>

<p><i>See findings under: FAO's Evaluation Policy and OED's Reform Agenda</i></p>	<p><i>The "Evaluation Charter for OED" has become outdated</i></p> <p>Although the elaboration and approval in 2010 of an evaluation charter for OED was an important step in the development of FAO's evaluation function, it neglects auto-evaluation and decentralized evaluation (the Charter actually is not an evaluation policy for FAO but a charter for OED), it does not make reference to evaluation capacity development and it does not describe and prescribe in an adequate way processes that should be implemented so as to optimize the contribution of FAO's evaluation function to learning and accountability</p>	<p><i>6. The "Evaluation Charter for OED" should be replaced by an "Evaluation Policy" for FAO. To be implemented during the first semester of 2017 by a task force including the Legal Office, supported by OED and in consultation with the Office of the DG, , the Legal Office, and (for aspects related with decentralized/auto-evaluation) TCD, DDO and the Evaluation Committee.</i></p>

Annex 6: List of persons interviewed

Abdelmagied, Manar / Evaluation Analyst (OED)

Acosta, Natalia / Evaluation Officer (OED)

Al Argan, Fiesal Rasheed Salamh / Programme Committee member, Jordan Deputy FAO Rep (Agricultural Attaché)

Awabdeh, Omar / Evaluation Officer (OED)

Ayazi, Abdul Razak, former PC member, Alternate Permanent Representative, Afghanistan

Ayodele, James / Communications Specialist (OED)

Barahona, Carlos / Independent Evaluation of Evaluation Function Expert Panel member

Belli, Luisa / Evaluation Officer (OED)

Benitez, Raul / Assistant Director General, Regional Rep FAORLC

Bhouraskar, Ashwin / Evaluation Officer (OED)

Bonomi, Genny / Country Programme Evaluation - Evaluation Manager (OED)

Bottamedi, Federica / Evaluation Analyst (OED)

Bruno, Marta / Evaluation Officer (OED)

Bultemeier, Bernd / Evaluation Officer (OED)

Bunning, Sally / Senior Officer (AGL)

Burgeon, Dominique / Strategic Programme Leader, SO5

Campanhola, Clayton / Strategic Programme Leader SO2

Castro Salazar, René / Assistant Director General, Forestry Department (FODD)

Cossee, Olivier / Senior Evaluation Officer (OED)

Davis, Benjamin / Strategic Programme Leader SO3

De la Puerta, Rodrigo / OSD Director

Di Biasio, Elena / Evaluation Manager (OED)

Duah, Maame / Evaluation Analyst (OED)

Festus, Akinnifesi / Senior Adviser, SO2

Fitzsimon, John / Inspector General a.i. (OIG)

Fonteneau, Francois, Programme Coordinator, AMIS, Statistics Division

Francescutti, Dino / Senior Economist, Investment Centre (TCI)

Frick, Martin / NRC Director

Frueh, Susanne / Independent Evaluation of Evaluation Function Expert Panel member

Garcia, Harvey / Evaluation Officer (OED)

Guenter, Hemrich / Senior Strategy and Planning Officer (OSP)

Guerrieri, Fernanda / Assistant Director General, Corporate Services Department (CS)

Gustafson, Daniel / Deputy Director-General Office for Operations (DDO)

Haight, Boyd / OSP Director

Halasiewicz, Andrzej / Programme Committee member, Poland FAO Perm Rep (Minister Counsellor)

Hemrich, Gunter/Deputy Director Nutrition and Food Systems (ESA)

Ho, Yuen / Evaluation Officer (OED)

Holst, Sara / Senior Evaluation Analyst (OED)

Hooper, Matthew / Programme Committee member, New Zealand Deputy FAO Rep (Counsellor, Agricultural Affairs)

Igarashi, Masahiro / OED Director

Jacqueson, Patrick / Senior Programme Officer, SO5

Khalid, Arwa / Evaluation Officer (OED)

Laracca, Giacomo / Field Liaison and Support Officer (OED)

Lartey, Anna / ESN Director

Mankoussou, Marc / Programme Committee member, Congo FAO Perm Rep (Adviser)

Mansur, Eduardo / AGL Director

Mathiesen, Arnie / FID Assistant Director-General

Mol, Victor / Programme Officer (OSD)

Molloy, Eoghan / Evaluation Officer (OED)

Monforte, Lavinia / Evaluation Analyst (OED)

Morrison, Jamie / Strategic Programme Leader SO4

Muller, Eva Ursula / FOA Director

Muthoo, Rakesh / Deputy Directeur de Cabinet (ODG)

Najib, Reza, Technical Water Operations Officer, Land and Water Division

Ngirwa, Wilfred / Independent Chairperson of FAO Council (CPAC)

Ould Abdellahi, Ahmedou / Evaluation Officer (OED)

Ouldahmed, Abdessalam / Assistant Director-General for the Near East (FAORNE)

Rakhmanin, Vladimir / Assistant Director General, Regional Rep FAOREU

Robinson, Eric / Programme Committee member, Canada Alternate FAO Rep

Rozencwaig, Claudio Javier / Programme Committee Vice-Chair, Argentina Ambassador, FAO Rep

Semedo, Maria Helena / Deputy Director-General Office for Natural Resources (DDN)

Shoja'aadin, Haytham Abdulmomen/Programme Committee member, Yemen

Solal Celigny, Amelie / Evaluation Manager (OED)

Stamoulis, Kostas / Strategic Programme Leader SO1

Stephen Tchicaya, Bintia / Programme Officer (OSD)

Talae, Tala / Evaluation Analyst (OED)

Tarazona, Carlos / Evaluation Officer (OED)

Tavares, Antonio / Legal Counsel (LEGD)

Tessitore, Savina / Evaluation Manager (OED)

Thomas, Laurent / Assistant Director-General, Technical Cooperation and Programme Coordination (TCDD)

Tijani, Bukar / Assistant Director General, Regional Rep FAORAF

Tomasi, Sergei / Programme Committee Chair, France Ambassador, FAO Rep

Unver, Ocay, Deputy Director, Land and Water Division

Villarreal, Marcela / OPC Director

Vos, Rob / ESA Director

Wang, Ren / Assistant Director General, Agriculture Department (AGDD)

Yabuqui, Nanae / Evaluation Officer (OED)

AGL: Land and Water Division

CPAC: Conference, Council and Government Relations

CS: Corporate Services Department

DDN: Deputy Director-General Natural Resources

DDO: Deputy Director-General Operations

ESN: Nutrition and Food Systems Division

FID: Office of Assistant Director-General, Fisheries and Aquaculture Dept

FOA: Forestry Policy and Resources Division

LEGD: Office of the Legal Counsel

NRC: Climate, Energy and Tenure Division

ODG: Office of the Director-General

OED: Office of Evaluation

OIG: Office of the Inspector General

OPC: Partnerships, Advocacy and Capacity Development

OSP: Office of Strategy, Planning and Resources Management

Annex 7: Documents reviewed

A) FAO sources

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FAO, 2014. Conservation and Adaptive Management of Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) Project – GCP/GLO/212/GFF

FAO, 2014. Evaluation of FAO's contribution to crisis-related transition Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development

FAO, 2014. Evaluation of FAO's Role in Support of Crop Production

FAO, 2014. Evaluation of FAO's cooperation with Colombia 2009-2013

FAO, 2014. Evaluation of FAO's Regional and Subregional Offices for Asia and Pacific

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FAO, 2014. External Evaluation of the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (the UN-REDD Programme)

FAO, 2014. FAO/WFP Joint Evaluation of Food Security Cluster Coordination (FSCC) in Humanitarian Action

FAO, 2014. FAO's effectiveness at country level: a synthesis of the evaluations of FAO's cooperation with four Middle Income Countries: Armenia, Colombia, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam

FAO, 2014. Independent Review of FAO Governance reforms

FAO, 2014. Supporting Food Security, Nutrition and Livelihoods in Sub-Saharan Africa - GCP /RAF/454/GER

FAO, 2015. Evaluación Final del Proyecto de fortalecimiento de agrocadenas seleccionadas con un enfoque empresarial en El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras y Nicaragua"

FAO, 2015. Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation.

FAO, 2015. Evaluation of FAO's contribution to knowledge on food and agriculture.

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FAO, 2015. IPCC Secretariat Enhancement Evaluation

FAO, 2015. Mid-Term Evaluation of "Food Security Policy and Strategy Capacity Building Programme" (FSPS) – GCP /SUD/038/EC

FAO, 2015. Mid-term Evaluation of Forest Protected Area Management (FPAM) Project in Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu and Niue - GCP/RAS/262/GFF

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FAO, 2015. Strengthening Forest Resources Management and Enhancing its Contribution to Sustainable Development, Land use and Livelihoods Project- GCP /GLO/194/MUL

FAO, 2015. Synthesis of Evaluations of FAO Regional and Subregional Office

FAO, 2015. Terms of Reference for the independent evaluation of the evaluation function. Programme Committee, Hundred and Seventeenth Session, Rome 9-13 March 2015.

B) Non- FAO sources

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DFAT, 2014: *Quality of Australian Aid Operational Evaluations*, June, Canberra: Office of Development Effectiveness, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian Government

IDRC, 2016. *Research Quality Plus Framework. A Holistic Approach to Evaluating Research*. Available at <http://www.idrc.ca/EN/Documents/Research-Quality-Plus-A-Holistic-Approach-to-Evaluating-Research.pdf>

IFAD, 2011. *Evaluation Policy*.

IFAD, 2015. *The evolution of the independent evaluation function at IFAD*. Available at <https://www.ifad.org/documents/10180/0e375b25-cd1f-41b6-a8f3-1049502ec4c8>

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UN, 2012. Independent evaluation of lessons learned from Delivering as One. Available at <http://www.un.org/en/ga/deliveringasone/pdf/summaryreportweb.pdf>

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UNEG 2013. *Revision of the Norms and Standards* by Estelle Raimondo and Osvaldo Feinstein.

UNEG 2016 *Norms and Standards for Evaluation*

WFP 2015 *Evaluation Policy (2016–2021)* WFP/EB.2/2015/4-A/Rev.1

Annex 8: Terms of Reference

Note: although as per the Terms of Reference the evaluation was planned to start in September 2015 and end by November 2016, the work actually started on February 17th 2016 while the date for its finalization remains invariable.

February 2015

PC 117/2



联合国
粮食及
农业组织

Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Organisation des Nations
Unies pour l'alimentation
et l'agriculture

Продовольственная и
сельскохозяйственная организация
Объединенных Наций

Organización de las
Naciones Unidas para la
Alimentación y la Agricultura

منظمة
للغذية والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة



PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

Hundred and Seventeenth Session

Rome, 9-13 March 2015

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF THE EVALUATION FUNCTION

Executive Summary

- In line with the provisions made in the Charter for the FAO Office of Evaluation, the Independent Evaluation of the Evaluation Function in FAO will be conducted in 2015-2016 to be submitted to the Council in 2017.
- The present document contains the draft Terms of Reference for this evaluation, as requested by the Programme Committee at its 116th session.

Action Requested from the Programme Committee

- The Committee is invited to provide comments it may deem appropriate on the draft to enable finalization of the Terms of Reference..

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

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Other documents can be consulted at www.fao.org*



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I. Background and mandate

1. The Independent External Evaluation of FAO completed in 2007 led to a process of reform embedded in the Immediate Plan of Action (IPA), which included a strengthened role for evaluation in FAO. In January 2010 the Evaluation Service was separated from the then Office of Programme, Budget and Evaluation to become the Office of Evaluation (OED) "reporting to the Director-General and to Council through the Programme Committee."¹ The Charter for the FAO Office of Evaluation, providing the policy framework for the evaluation function in FAO, was approved by 139th session of the Council in May 2010 and reflected in the Basic Texts of the Organization.

2. The Charter makes provisions for "quality assurance and continued strengthening of the evaluation function", through three actions: strengthening of existing peer review of major reports; biennial review by a small group of independent peers for conformity of work to evaluation best-practice and standards; and an independent evaluation of the evaluation function every six years. The latter action will be implemented in 2015-2016. The evaluation report will be submitted to the Director-General and to the Council via the Programme Committee in early 2017. Since the 2012 Peer Review, several significant changes have taken place both within and outside FAO making this a timely moment to conduct the evaluation with a view to correlatively adjusting the Charter for the Office of Evaluation according to its outcomes.

3. In February 2013, a new Director of Evaluation was appointed and started to introduce a number of reform measures in large part in line with the suggestions made by the Peer Review. Under the guidance of the Director, OED established its Reform Agenda for 2014-2015 in June 2014, which defined overall goal and intended outcomes as:

Goal:	
FAO and its partners contribute effectively to the sustainable reduction of poverty and hunger, in alignment with FAO's agreed goals and reviewed Strategic Framework. To this end, OED aims to provide credible, useful and evidence-based evaluations that feed into the policy and practice of FAO and its partners.	
Outcome 1	Improved evaluation utility and consistency resulting from enhanced ownership of evaluations by OED
Outcome 2	OED evaluations supported by sound evidence on results
Outcome 3	Enhanced engagement of key stakeholders, including: (a) national government and other partners for country programme and major project evaluations; and (b) FAO senior managers and governing body Members for thematic and strategic evaluations

4. The reform measures included:

- a) changing the focus of evaluations to the assessment of results achieved from that of performance of an organizational unit or a programme;
- b) introducing modern evaluation concepts and methodologies, including on the evaluation of complexity in line with FAO's shift from a project-based to a programme approach;
- c) clarifying the accountability on the contents of the evaluation reports, i.e. their authorship, and introducing evaluations led by staff evaluators who will be accountable to the Director on the evaluation's contents;
- d) placing importance on methodology - evaluations to start with clearly defined evaluation questions and methodology to answer those questions;
- e) placing importance on staff capacity development and the need for continuous learning.

¹ FAO Basic Texts Charter for the FAO Office of Evaluation

5. This internal reform process has been taking place in a broader FAO transformational process to improve its support to the needs of member countries through *inter alia* decentralization of programming and technical support functions from headquarters to regional and country offices, and introduction of more structured framework for reporting on results. Some measures taken since 2012 include:

- a) the approval of the reviewed Strategic Framework 2010-2019² in June 2013;
- b) development of a new results framework and approach to monitoring for the period 2014-2017;

6. The external landscape has also evolved greatly in the past few years. Fundamental issues regarding the effectiveness of international development continue to be widely debated, including the role and work of the UN system, One UN, the framing of the post-2015 sustainable development goals and stronger accountability to, and leadership by countries of their development processes. These discussions carry implications for evaluation in the UN, including lately an increased interest by Members on capacity development for evaluation,³ rationalization of evaluation and other oversight structures, and discussions within the evaluation field on the suitability of different evaluation approaches.

II. Purpose

7. The purpose of this evaluation is to re-examine, after five years since the Charter was approved, the contribution of the evaluation function to the achievement of FAO goals at the global, regional and national levels, with a forward-looking view to making strategic and policy suggestions for its contribution within a comprehensive framework of accountability and oversight for the Organization.

III. Scope and objectives

8. The subject of evaluation (the evaluand) is the evaluation function in FAO as it is currently set up (i.e. at the time of the evaluation) and OED evaluations as they are currently carried out. The evaluation will also be informed by the evaluations and practices in the recent past, as needed.

9. The evaluation will aim to examine the following three aspects:

- a) Relevance and usefulness of evaluations: *To what extent the evaluations as currently practiced respond to the needs of FAO's internal and external stakeholders and are being used for good effect?*
- b) Appropriateness and effectiveness of evaluation function: *To what extent the current set up of the evaluation function – including its mandate, structure, responsibilities and processes – is appropriate and effective in responding to the evolving needs of the Organization and its member countries?*
- c) Synergies within the context of oversight functions: *To what extent is the evaluation function placed in the context of all oversight functions of the Organization with due coordination, avoiding duplication of efforts, making efficient use of resources and achieving efficiency gains?*

IV. Roles and responsibilities

10. The evaluation will be conducted by an independent evaluation team with two external experts with extensive evaluation experience and sound knowledge of institutional issues surrounding evaluation functions within the UN system.

11. The evaluation team will be supported by an evaluation panel of 3 to 4 members. The panel will be composed of members representing different backgrounds, containing geographic balance and

² C 2013/7

³ UNGA Resolution A/RES/69/237 "Capacity building for the evaluation of development activities at the country level"

expertise, covering such aspects as modern evaluation methodologies, and public-sector policies and international cooperation in development. The panel will advise the team on the design of evaluation, and conduct quality check of the draft report.

12. OED will fund and manage the evaluation: developing the terms of reference, selecting and commissioning the evaluation to the evaluation team, supporting the team in designing, conducting and finalizing the evaluation, and issuing the report. OED will facilitate the quality control process, but will not control the contents of the report.

13. Inputs from the Programme Committee and Management will be sought prior to the finalization of the evaluation design in order to ensure the relevance and usefulness of the exercise to the Organization.

V. Methodology

14. The evaluation questions will be addressed by defining workable subquestions that will be answered from the analysis of data collected. These are defined as follows.⁴

A. <u>Relevance and usefulness of evaluations</u> : To what extent the evaluations as currently carried out respond to the needs of FAO's internal and external stakeholders and are being used for good effect?	
(i)	How far topics selected reflect the strategic directions and concerns of the Organization, its Members, the UN system and the wider development community?
(ii)	Are the evaluations of professionally acceptable quality?
(iii)	To what extent are the evaluations used and how effective have the evaluation practices been in facilitating it?
(iv)	To what extent are evaluations being effectively used in support of decisions, including strategic decision, both by Management and the membership through the various governing bodies of the Organization?
(iv)	What has been the impact of evaluations, including their influence in supporting learning, enhancing accountability and organizational improvement at the relevant levels (corporate, regional, country and project)?
B. <u>Appropriateness and effectiveness of evaluation function</u> : To what extent the current set up of the evaluation function – including its mandate, structure, responsibilities and processes – is appropriate and effective in responding to the evolving needs of the Organization and its members?	
(i)	To what extent the evaluation policy conforms to international standards, and is consistent with other relevant policies and frameworks within FAO (notably its RBM framework) and outside FAO (e.g. QCPR ⁵ resolutions, UNEG ⁶ norms and standards)?
(ii)	To what extent the current set up of the evaluation function still responds to the evolving contexts and needs within and outside the Organization (such as decentralization in FAO, or Delivering-as-One UN approach in countries) and where does it fail to do so?
(iii)	To what extent the system of evaluations currently set up is responding to the needs of evaluations, in particular those requested by programme managers or resource partners?

⁴ These subquestions are to be reviewed and validated by the evaluation team and the panel during the design stage of evaluation.

⁵ Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR)

⁶ United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)

(iv) What are the appropriate role and responsibility of OED in result-based management and the creation of an evaluation culture, i.e. the ability of FAO programme managers to collect data on programme performance and results achieved, and properly analyze them for their decision-making
(v) How far the policy sets out clear functional and organizational arrangements to ensure that evaluation contributes effectively to learning, accountability and performance improvement within FAO at all levels?
(vi) How meaningful and cost-effective is the current set up for follow-up to past evaluations?

15. For each subquestion, the evaluation team will identify data sources and data collection and analysis methods. The analytical tools to be used could include following:

- a) Contextual analysis of key internal and external developments: This entails contextual analysis of key developments relating to the role of the UN system in general and FAO in particular in international development cooperation, and their influence in the evolving role of evaluation.
- b) Mapping of evaluation reports: This entails an analysis of the evaluation's geographical scope (corporate, regional, country, project), thematic coverage (by strategic objective); purpose (formative; summative), quality assurance, budget, follow-up status, and expected use/impact.
- c) Meta-analyses of follow-up reports: This entails synthesizing common findings and trends emerging from the follow-up reports issues since the new evaluation policy took effect.
- d) Comparative analyses of RBM/evaluation functions, policies and capacities in the UN and the international community: This consists of examining the structure, capacity, system and processes in a sample of similar UN agencies and development partners in order to draw lessons and best-fit practices. As far as possible, comparative analysis should concentrate on organizations of the United Nations system which follow the same business and operating model as FAO.
- e) Case studies: A sample of different types of evaluations recently conducted (corporate, regional, country, project) will be examined in detail in order to identify elements/factors influencing the utility of evaluation for key stakeholders.

16. The key documents to be used in designing the evaluation and used as the secondary data sources include the following:

- a) The Charter for the FAO Office of Evaluation (2010)
- b) UNEG/DAC Peer Review of FAO's Evaluation Function (2012)
- c) The OED Reform Agenda 2014-2015 (2014)
- d) Indicative Rolling Work plan of Evaluations 2015-2017⁷ (2014)
- e) Report on the UN system evaluation functions to be issued by the Joint Inspection Unit (2015)
- f) UNEG Norms and Standards for UN Evaluations (2005), and other relevant UNEG guidelines and web-based data
- g) Resolutions of quadrennial comprehensive policy reviews (QCPRs) of the General Assembly of UN operational activities for development (2008, 2012)
- h) Internal manuals, templates and guidelines used by OED
- i) OED evaluations, including the report, the terms of references, the management response and follow-up reports (where available)
- j) Evaluation policies of UNEG member organizations⁸

⁷ PC 116/5

⁸ Available on [UNEG website](#)

VI. Process and timeline

17. *Preparation*: OED will set up the evaluation, including the establishment of the terms of reference, as well as the evaluation team and panel.

18. *Inception*: The evaluation team will design the evaluation supported by the panel. It will study main documents and hold consultations with key stakeholders, including some members of the governing bodies and Management. The deliverable of this phase will be an inception report, detailing the evaluation design

19. *Data collection and analysis*: The evaluation team will engage in data collection activities and analysis according to the design elaborated in the inception report. The deliverable of this phase will be a first draft report of the evaluation, possibly accompanied by background studies.

20. *Quality control and validation*: The draft report is quality controlled by the panel, and then circulated for comments by OED and key stakeholders for factual checking and validation of findings. The deliverable of this phase is the final draft report.

21. *Stakeholder workshop*: The final draft report is discussed at a stakeholder workshop, to validate its conclusions and fine-tune its recommendations. The deliverable of this phase is the final report.

22. *Presentation of the report*: The final report is presented, as required, to the Programme Committee and Management. The report will be finally submitted to the Director-General and to the Council, together with the recommendations of the Programme Committee.

23. The tentative timeline is as follows:

Preparation	June-August 2015
Inception	September-October 2015
Data collection and analysis	November 2015-February 2016
Drafting	March 2016
Quality control and validation	April-May 2016
Stakeholder workshop	June 2016
Presentation of the report to the Programme Committee	November 2016

VII. Report

24. The report should comply with the relevant UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN system, and contain an executive summary.

25. The structure of the report will be tentatively as follows.

- Acronyms
- Executive Summary
- Section 1. Background and methodology
- Section 2. Relevance and usefulness of FAO evaluations
- Section 3. Appropriateness and effectiveness of FAO evaluation function
- Section 4. Conclusions and recommendations
- Annexes



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Объединенных Наций

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Alimentación y la Agricultura

منظمة
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Background papers

Background paper # 1

1. FAO's Centralized Evaluation, Decentralized Implementation and Decentralized/Auto-evaluation

There is a disconnect between FAO's increasingly decentralized implementation model and its fully centralized evaluation model. In fact, the Evaluation Charter of the Organization, approved in 2010, makes no reference to "decentralized evaluation" and only one reference, between parentheses, to "auto-evaluation", to indicate in para. 34 that the Evaluation Office "is solely responsible for the conduct of all evaluations (with the exception of auto-evaluations)".

It should be noted that the Charter's title is "CHARTER FOR THE FAO OFFICE OF EVALUATION", whereas, as stated in the first paragraph of the Charter (that provides a summary of the background), "The Immediate Plan of Action approved by the 35th Session of the FAO Conference in November 2008 specified that a ***comprehensive evaluation policy*** would be incorporated in a Charter for approval by the Council" (italics and bold added). The Charter does not address "auto-evaluation" nor decentralized evaluations (and does not even considered the role that FAO Office of Evaluation could or should play with respect to "auto-evaluation" or decentralized evaluations). The Charter therefore is not a comprehensive evaluation policy⁴³.

The 2007 IEE pointed out that "The link between auto-evaluations and corporate evaluations is weak; so is the link to management decisions. Its potential as a low-cost instrument that invites intellectual integrity with a potentially high learning return in the evaluation hierarchy could be better exploited" (para. 1176). In 2016 the independent evaluation of FAO's evaluation function inquired about, and searched for, recent auto-evaluations and/or decentralized evaluations and they appeared to be discontinued. (rather than strengthened, as it was the case at IFAD and World Food Programme - WFP⁴⁴).

The lack of auto-evaluations/decentralized evaluations is the major gap in FAO's evaluation function, given the importance of decentralization for the implementation of its operations and also in terms of good evaluation practices.

Furthermore, the importance of decentralized evaluations and the role of central evaluation offices with respect to decentralized evaluations was recently indicated in the Management Response to the JIU's "Analysis of the evaluation function in the United Nations system"⁴⁵.

⁴³ This report includes a background paper fully devoted to FAO's Evaluation Charter.

⁴⁴ "Evaluation Policy (2016–2021)" (WFP/EB.2/2015/4-A/Rev.1) and IFAD (2011) *Evaluation Policy*.

⁴⁵ Note by the Secretary-General. UN General Assembly, A/70/686/Add.1, 18 March 2016



When considering Recommendation 9 of the JIU report, which is about the support to enhance the quality and added value of decentralized evaluation, for which many organizations of the UN expressed support, it is mentioned that several of these organizations noted that responsibility for the implementation of the recommendation should rest with a centralized evaluation function, since the offices involved provided methodological support and ensured that the evaluation capacities of decentralized evaluation offices were well developed.

It should be noted that decentralized evaluations do not require “decentralized evaluation offices” mentioned at the end of the preceding paragraph. In FAO’s context, these evaluations, and/or auto-evaluations, could be managed by country (or eventually regional) offices. The main text of this report explores this issue and suggests in section 4 a set of options consistent with Recommendation 9 of the JIU report and with the corresponding management response.

The following table compares the UN Rome based agencies (RBA) with respect to auto-evaluation⁴⁶ and decentralized evaluations:

Table 1a Decentralized and Auto-Evaluation in the UN RBA: Current

	Decentralized Evaluations.	Auto (or Self-) Evaluation
FAO	None	None
IFAD	None	High*
WFP	High*	None

*“High” meaning that it is very significant, having high importance in the evaluation architecture of the Rome based agency

Table 1b Decentralized and Auto-Evaluation in the UN RBA: 15 years ago

	Decentralized Evaluations.	Auto (or Self-) Evaluation

⁴⁶ In the case of IFAD “auto-evaluations” are called “self-evaluations”, following the terminology of the *OECD Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management*, which defines “self-evaluation” (“auto-évaluation” in French) as “an evaluation by those who are entrusted with the design and delivery of a development intervention”.

FAO	None	Some
IFAD	None	None

Background paper # 2

2. FAO's Evaluation Charter and the Evaluation Function at FAO

This background paper focuses only on those aspects of the Evaluation Charter which are particularly relevant for the evaluation of the evaluation function at FAO, and that could have an implication for understanding some aspects and limitations faced so far by evaluation at FAO and/or for considering an eventual revision of the Evaluation Charter in light of FAO's experience as well as that of other UN organizations since 2010, when the Charter was approved⁴⁷

1. Charter's Scope: The Immediate Plan of Action (IPA) approved by the 35th Session of the FAO Conference in November 2008 specified that a comprehensive evaluation policy would be incorporated in a Charter for approval by the Council. Even though the Charter's first paragraph provides this background information, the Charter's title is "CHARTER FOR THE FAO OFFICE OF EVALUATION". In fact, the Evaluation Charter of the Organization, approved in 2010, makes no reference to "decentralized evaluation" and only one reference, between parentheses, to "auto-evaluation", to indicate in para. 34 that the Evaluation Office "is solely responsible for the conduct of all evaluations (with the exception of auto-evaluations)". The Charter does not address "auto-evaluation" nor decentralized evaluations (and does not even considered the role that FAO Office of Evaluation could or should play with respect to "auto-evaluation" or decentralized evaluations). The Charter therefore is not a comprehensive evaluation policy

2. Responsibility for the evaluations: The Charter states i) that the evaluation teams are led and largely composed of independent external consultants and ii) that the evaluation team is solely responsible for the findings and recommendations of the evaluation reports, subject to quality assurance by the Office of Evaluation. The Charter indicates that the Office of Evaluation assures adherence to the terms of reference and recognized quality standards, timeliness, and provides information and methodological support to the evaluation. This arrangement does not correspond to OED practice, which in line with what is done by other evaluation offices of similar UN organizations, has evaluation teams led by its staff and assumes responsibility for its reports.

3. Roles of the evaluation function: According to the Charter, i) evaluation provides *accountability* to Member Countries and to the Director-General, giving Member Countries a more in-depth understanding and objective basis for their decisions in the governing bodies and for cooperation in the Organization's programmes; ii) evaluation also contributes to corporate *learning*, feeding lessons into a robust feedback loop. Evaluation provides a sound basis for improvements in the Organization's programmes in terms of their relevance to countries, definition of objectives, their design and implementation; iii) evaluation is an integral element of a functioning results-based management (RBM) system. It provides accountability on results, in particular on outcomes and impacts of FAO's work. It informs the formulation of programmes, the definition of priorities and the arrangements to maximize institutional effectiveness and iv) FAO participates in system-wide evaluation initiatives. Thus evaluation contributes to assessments of development effectiveness by the UN system. Sections 2 and 3 of

⁴⁷ As stated in the Evaluation Charter, "The Charter may need to be revised in the future"

this report assess the extent to which evaluation is playing these roles and section 4 makes recommendations to enhance the contribution of the evaluation function.

4. FAO's work subject to evaluation: The Charter indicates that all work of FAO financed from the regular budget of the Organization (mandatory assessed contributions) as well as that financed from voluntarily contributed extra-budgetary resources, is subject to evaluation (without specifying that these evaluations should be conducted or managed by the Office of Evaluation).

5. On the Independence of the Evaluation Function: Independence, according to the Charter, is one of the primary principles underpinning evaluation in FAO. It "should be protected throughout the evaluation process: policy, institutional framework, management of the evaluation function, conduct of evaluations and follow-up. The evaluation function must be located in the Organization outside the line management that it is mandated to evaluate, and have a direct line of reporting to the governing bodies and the Director-General. In this way, it remains separate from those responsible for the design and implementation of the policies and operations that are evaluated. It must be free from undue influence by management through independent control of the financial and human resources allocated to evaluation (...)". This applies to independent evaluation, but not to decentralized and/or auto-evaluations. The text of the evaluation report discusses in a broader context the implications of the proposed arrangement for independent evaluations, whereas in this background paper it is appropriate to highlight the neglect of decentralized and/or auto-evaluations in this part of the Charter.

6. On the evaluation agenda and the expected usefulness of evaluations: One issue that was flagged by the Programme Committee (PC) to the IEFEE team is that the selection of topics for evaluation was unclear, and given the key role of the PC vis-à-vis OED, this is an important issue. In this respect, it is worthwhile to mention that the Evaluation Charter includes /expected/ usefulness as another "primary principle underpinning evaluation in FAO". It states that "Usefulness should always be a prime consideration for selection of a topic for evaluation. Evaluations will be most useful when addressing key areas of concern for the governing bodies and/or FAO management, especially when there are perceived to be problems, priorities are changing or if there are new opportunities. Evaluation should be timed to fit into the management decision-making process". If these points were taken into account when submitting the work programme and at the time of presenting evaluation reports, it is unlikely that there will be a communication gap concerning the rationale for OED's evaluations.

7. Types of evaluations: The Charter mentions three types of evaluation,

i) Evaluations for the governing bodies

ii) Country evaluations (Synthesis reports consolidating the results across country evaluations are considered by the governing bodies)

iii) Evaluations of individual programmes and projects, usually funded from extra-budgetary resources.

It should be noted that in paragraph 46 of the Charter, on the budget for evaluation, it is stated that "The Trust Funds will be utilized to finance thematic, programme and country evaluations" (which is a different classification of evaluations).

In addition to these categories, OED also considers (in its website) “impact evaluations” and “evaluations by/with partners”; furthermore, there are other categories, such as “resilience evaluations”, which are also used by OED.

8. Evaluation Follow-up: This section of the Charter could make reference to UNEG Good Practice Guidelines for Follow up to Evaluations, approved the same year as the Charter (2010)⁴⁸. These Good Practice Guidelines provide guidance to UN Evaluation Offices and Senior Management on:

- Good practices in management response to evaluation;
- Development of systems for tracking and reporting on the implementation of the evaluations' recommendations, and
- Mechanisms for facilitating learning and knowledge development from evaluations

9. The Internal Evaluation Committee: A committee of this kind is quite unique within the UN system and the IEFE team verified that it plays a valuable role. The Charter indicates that The Director of the Office of Evaluation serves as Secretary. This should be reconsidered as it affects the perception of independence of the Evaluation Office. Furthermore, the Evaluation Committee could also include in its scope the oversight of decentralized and auto-evaluation.

10. Budget for Evaluation: The IPA established that “ The evaluation Regular Programme budget will be increased to 0.8-1.0% of the total Regular Programme Budget (over two biennia) and once decided upon by the Governing Bodies, as part of the Programme of Work and Budget approval process, allocated in full to the evaluation office. All contributors of extra-budgetary funds will respect the Council decision that at least 1% of all extra-budgetary funds should be allocated for evaluation”. In turn, the Charter states that the Regular Programme budget for evaluation will attain the level of at least 0.8% of the total Regular Programme Budget, and it makes no reference to the Council’s decision concerning the percentage of extra-budgetary funds to be allocated for evaluation.

⁴⁸ <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/610>