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**Enhancing FAO's capacity to evaluate contributions at country level:
Proposal for Strengthening Evaluation in Decentralized Offices**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This paper sets out a proposal for expanding FAO's evaluation function to include decentralized evaluation alongside a centralized model in a way that is compatible with OED's mandate, so that evaluation can perform its various roles more effectively and contribute to organizational learning. It aims to stimulate and support programme and project managers in enlivening the latter phases of the project cycle, generating evaluation evidence and making it transparent and available for wider learning at the regional level.
- This proposal comprises a package of measures that OED will take (Section 3) together with other parts of the Organization. Out-posting Evaluation Officers to Regional Offices and offering a comprehensive capacity-development programme with commensurate financial resources (Section 5) form a significant contribution but only one part of a larger whole. The roles and responsibilities of staff in Regional and Country Offices and measures to manage risk are equally important.
- The proposal integrates comments received from consultations with FAO Management. This short version of the proposal document is being presented to the 128th Session of the Programme Committee for approval by its Members. If the proposal is approved, FAO will need to develop a new Evaluation Policy covering both the centralized and decentralized evaluation functions.

GUIDANCE SOUGHT FROM THE PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

- The Programme Committee is invited to review the content of the document and provide guidance as deemed appropriate.

**Enhancing the use of evaluation for learning
in FAO at regional and country levels
through decentralized evaluation
– a proposal**

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

OFFICE OF EVALUATION

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1. Introduction

1. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the United Nations Secretary-General's initiative to reposition the United Nations Development System (UNDS) have put the spotlight on the collective accountability of the United Nations System at country level, as well as the role of evaluation in generating and using evidence to demonstrate results. Many United Nations agencies have opted to complement their centralized evaluation function with some form of decentralized evaluation, with a view to increasing evaluation coverage, enhancing learning in Regional and Country Offices and augmenting their contribution to system-wide evaluations.

Box 1: Definition of decentralized evaluation

The Joint Inspection Unit's (JIU) "Analysis of the evaluation function in the United Nations system" defines the decentralized evaluation as follows:

*"The decentralized evaluation is planned, managed and conducted outside the central evaluation unit. Historically, it was originally designated as self-evaluation, but this term is dropped due to its existence even in some central functions."*¹

2. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) evaluations are currently conducted centrally by the independent Office of Evaluation (OED) and managed by staff at headquarters in Rome. The Charter for the FAO Office of Evaluation was approved by the Programme Committee in 2010.²
3. In 2016, the Evaluation of FAO's Evaluation Function³ recommended that "FAO should develop a programme of decentralized evaluations, including mid-term evaluations, through its Regional Offices [...]. Through this programme [...] FAO will strengthen the evaluation function, complementing the independent evaluation (for which OED is responsible) with evaluations conducted by regional or country offices [...]."
4. A move towards a more decentralized system started in January 2019, when OED informed all FAO budget holders that they would become responsible for conducting project mid-term evaluations. The initial phase of this decentralization has highlighted a lack of evaluation capacity in Regional and Country Offices as a major constraint. It has also confirmed a conclusion of the 2016 Evaluation of the Evaluation Function, that there is a certain disconnect between evaluation and management and that there have been missed opportunities for evaluation to contribute to the programming cycle and results-based management (RBM) at regional and country level.
5. This proposal aims to enhance FAO's evaluation function, to enable it to perform better in the evolving organizational environment, especially its RBM system. The success of the proposed measures will require an enabling environment that values organizational learning and ensures complementarity and synergies between decentralized and centralized evaluations, so that the evaluation function can better support FAO in pursuit of the 2030 Agenda.
6. If approved by the Programme Committee, the proposal will form an integral part of the comprehensive FAO Evaluation Policy planned for development in the latter part of 2020. In

¹ JIU (2014)

² FAO (2010)

³ FAO (2016)

developing the proposal, some policy issues have emerged that go beyond the decentralization of evaluation, which will need to be addressed in the new Evaluation Policy. We flag these throughout this document for consideration in the following manner:

Elements to be addressed further in the new Evaluation Policy are flagged in an orange banner.

2. Rationale

7. There are three separate but inter-related, ongoing strategic developments to enhance development effectiveness:
 - the use of evaluation results at regional and country level
 - the strengthening of FAO's RBM system
 - the repositioning of the UNDS at country level.
8. Decentralizing part of the evaluation function and its resources to the regional and country levels in solid partnership and close collaboration with Management aims to support all three strategic goals, boost momentum and make a concrete contribution to FAO learning.

2.1 Use of evaluation results at regional and country level

9. Evaluation results should be consistently and comprehensively incorporated into FAO's strategies, programmes and decision-making. While there are good examples of evaluations having influenced corporate decision-making and programme direction, there is less evidence of follow-up and the use of evaluations by direct stakeholders at regional and country level.
10. Consultations with Regional and Country Offices to develop this proposal saw consensus on the weak links between evaluation results and the decision-making they should inform at Management level, including new project design – despite the recognized value of evaluations (be they project or country programme evaluations). This indicates a need for much stronger support to promote the use of evaluation results for organizational learning. Good dissemination of evaluation results is not sufficient. Enhancing the *use* of evaluations at regional and country level requires good knowledge and understanding of country-level processes and close follow-up. This cannot be done optimally from headquarters.
11. This proposal addresses that “learning gap” by establishing the entire evaluation process for certain types of evaluation (with the necessary support and resources) to the primary users of the evidence generated, where strategic and programming decision-making takes place.
12. Greater engagement of stakeholders in decentralized evaluation processes could also lead to increased demand for evaluation of all kinds, particularly to meet learning needs specific to a geographic area or a particular time. This would broaden the evaluation evidence base for evaluation synthesis and for drawing lessons of regional and corporate relevance.

2.2 Strengthening the role of evaluation in RBM

13. In FAO, there is no single unit mandated to provide support for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) or RBM. Such responsibilities lie with several units and there are a number of systems in place to plan and report on results at various levels. The Office of Evaluation proposes to contribute more effectively to this.
14. The FAO corporate results framework guides the planning and monitoring of the Organization's work **at corporate level**. It provides the basis for assessing and reporting how FAO's actions contribute to changes at national, regional and global level. Monitoring and reporting at the Strategic Objective and Outcome level take place at the end of each biennium and are documented in a Programme Implementation Report (PIR). The Corporate Outcome Assessment, conducted regularly in a sample of countries, measures changes in country-level outcomes (that is, improvements in country-level enabling environments and capacities to

- achieve FAO's Strategic Objectives). Progress on Outputs is monitored on an annual basis, with all units and offices reporting on their achievements per the corporate outputs.
15. The PIR includes a section on lessons learned for each Strategic Programme, which is taken into consideration in subsequent planning processes. Lessons from evaluations are not included, however, and there is no corporate feedback mechanism to facilitate the systematic use of these results to adapt FAO programmatic direction.
 16. **At country level**, in 2013, FAO introduced Country Programming Frameworks (CPFs) as a tool for country-level strategic prioritization and medium-term programming. CPFs now stem entirely from the United Nations Cooperation Framework. CPF results are reported in country annual reports, which must be completed by each FAO Representative (FAOR) at the end of each year. These reports are sent to the Office for Support to Decentralized Offices (OSD) and to Regional Representatives, which may provide feedback. However, there is no formal accountability mechanism based on the content of these reports, nor any guidance on how to measure and report on the results expected from the CPF. This undermines the systematic assessment of the effectiveness of FAO's work at country level.
 17. Demonstrating an appetite to improve learning and accountability, about 25 percent of FAO Country Offices have hired an M&E consultant or team to provide general M&E support for their CPF, even though the M&E officer function has not been an official position at FAO to date. Still, the 2019 Audit of the Project Cycle stated that "many Country Offices and projects continue to function without M&E plans, dedicated M&E staff and M&E budgets. Even Country Offices with a high capacity of M&E staff, such as offices with a high number of emergency operations, generally lack a clear overall M&E plan to bring all of the different monitoring components together to provide a holistic view of project status."⁴
 18. **At project level**, FAO has established a set of corporate standards and procedures for project formulation and implementation, called the Project Cycle. These procedures span six different phases, from "identification" to "closure", and form the FAO Project Cycle Manual. The manual is particularly detailed on the first phase of the cycle, but contains far less information and guidance on project implementation or M&E. Indeed, FAO does not have a clear policy on project implementation or M&E or any resources dedicated to project management. For all of FAO's projects, the person formally responsible for project management is the budget holder.⁵ In terms of reporting, all FAO projects must submit an annual report based on their logframe. However, there is no clear mechanism allowing the use of these reports to improve project performance through adaptive management during implementation.
 19. Supporting FAO Management's decision to invest further in the RBM system, specialist evaluation staff, decentralized from OED, will work closely with regional and country teams to ensure evaluation is fully embedded in and contributing to both the RBM system and practice. They will also ensure evaluation evidence is available in a suitable form, in a timely manner, at the appropriate level, to fuel learning for management and steer course adjustments.

⁴ FAO (2019a)

⁵ The budget holder is the FAOR for country-level projects, the Sub-regional Representative for sub-regional projects, the Regional Representative for regional projects and the head of the relevant technical department at Headquarters for global projects.

2.3 Enhancing evaluation's contribution in the context of UNDS repositioning at country level

20. As mentioned, the Secretary-General's reform initiative calls for a paradigm shift, emphasizing a central role for evaluation as both a learning and accountability tool. In addition to Cooperation Framework Evaluations, it encourages joint evaluations to reap the benefits of substantive links between agency actions. Longer term, decentralized evaluation functions, aligned between agencies, should offer the potential for greater capacity to evaluate by sector of intervention and lower transaction costs than centrally managed joint evaluations.
21. To this end, the draft United Nations System-wide Evaluation Policy plans to establish collaborative platforms at regional level with a view to promoting joint and system-wide evaluation activities and to generate and share evaluative regional knowledge. Furthermore, they are expected "to bring together capacity at regional level to commission and quality-assure joint evaluations of the respective [United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework] in line with the repositioning agenda, SDGs and using the principle of mutual recognition".⁶
22. Therefore, it will be important for FAO to have adequate evaluation capacity to engage in joint evaluation initiatives and related quality assurance and oversight mechanisms at country and regional levels.⁷ This will complement other disciplines brought into decentralized hubs of expertise to support a country-oriented model.

⁶ UNEG Working Group (2019)

⁷ In line with the recommendations of the Evaluation of FAO's Strategic Results Framework (FAO, 2019b).

3. Proposed measures for decentralization

23. This section proposes three main measures, namely: (i) to decentralize selected types of project and country evaluation; (ii) to establish Regional Evaluation Teams, composed of out-posted OED Evaluation Officers, in larger Regional Offices; and (iii) to enhance evaluation capacity to support decentralized evaluation and the use of evaluation.
24. These measures aim to address issues raised in the previous section and to enhance the usefulness and use of evaluation for learning and performance enhancement in the context of the FAO RBM approach. The proposal focuses on meeting the evaluation needs at regional and country levels of FAO as these are where the contributions of evaluation to RBM and, ultimately, to organizational and programmatic performance require most attention. It is hoped that this set of measures will help FAO to better respond to the growing demand for evaluation at country and regional level. It will also refocus the work of OED to where it be most effective. Indeed, OED's core work will remain the production of independent, complex evaluations that answer strategic questions about FAO policies, strategies and programmes. OED's role in project evaluation will see a shift in focus to where it can be most effective and enhance evaluation coverage of projects as a whole.

3.1 Measure 1: Decentralize certain project and country evaluations

25. It is proposed that two categories of evaluation be introduced at FAO.
 - i. **Centralized evaluations:** planned and managed by OED and presented to Senior Management as well as to the Programme Committee and, for the latter, either as individual evaluation or as meta-synthesis as appropriate. Centralized evaluations will cover corporate thematic work, global and strategic programmes, selected country programmes of strategic importance, global, regional and multi-country projects (i.e. projects in more than one country), and resilience evaluations (including those in a single country);
 - ii. **Decentralized evaluations:** planned and managed by Budget Holders (FAOR). They cover single-country projects, and some country programmes. They follow OED's guidance – including impartiality safeguards – and quality standards. OED provides guidance through the Regional Evaluation Team. As per centralized evaluations, decentralized evaluations are carried out by external evaluation teams.
26. What sets centralized and decentralized evaluations apart is their governance, management and scope. They are complementary and linked; together they form the building blocks of a comprehensive evaluation system.
27. The decentralization of project and country evaluations will be accompanied by a set of measures and resources to ensure adequate planning, quality, coverage and reporting on decentralized evaluations, to avoid overloading FAORs and to ensure the provision of adequate resources and capacities. In particular, during the transition phase.
 - i. Details will be fine-tuned in consultation with Country Offices to find the optimum solution based on their capacities and resources.
 - ii. The timing of the decentralization of project and country-level evaluations will be adapted to ensure that adequate capacity and resources are in place before the decentralized offices are asked to take on these new responsibilities.
 - iii. Flexible and innovative models will be introduced for the Country Offices with fewer resources and capacities. For example, a Regional Evaluation Team can lend close

support to a Country Office managing its first evaluations, or a group of Country Offices without M&E officers could hire a consultant evaluation manager using a pooled fund established for this purpose.

3.1.1 Decentralize single-country project evaluations

Objectives

- Increase usefulness and use of project evaluations by country stakeholders
- Increase use of evaluation in country-level RBM
- Facilitate engagement of stakeholders, learning from and follow-up to evaluations
- Develop evaluation capacity at country level
- Focus work of OED on major strategic and/or complex evaluations

28. It is proposed that the responsibility for the **final evaluations of single-country projects** be shifted to the project budget holder (FAOR), with a view to taking the evaluation closer to the project planning and decision-making processes. The FAOR will thus be responsible for planning and budgeting the evaluation and overseeing its implementation and follow-up (per the project mid-term evaluation). The budget holder will receive support and guidance from OED. The evaluation manager appointed by the budget holder will be responsible for the quality of the evaluation. To ensure impartiality, where possible, the decentralized project evaluation should be managed by an officer who has not had any role in the project design and/or implementation – ideally an M&E officer based in the country. In the transition phase, it is proposed that this process start in countries with M&E capacity. More details on roles and responsibilities are provided in Section 4.
29. In order to increase global coverage of single-country project evaluations and, thus, opportunities for learning at country level, it is proposed that a new requirement be introduced at country level: in addition to meeting the current norm of evaluating all projects with a budget of more than USD 4 million and all Global Environment Facility projects, larger Country Offices must select at least two other projects per CPF cycle for decentralized evaluation. The additional project evaluations should, where possible, be selected from different CPF programme outcomes. Such a rule would increase ownership of the project evaluations by creating a reflection in countries on which projects FAO should learn from (those interventions that are strategically important, in the FAOR's opinion).

3.1.2 Decentralize certain types of country-level evaluation

Objectives

- Increase coverage of country-level evaluations
- Enhance the use of evaluation in FAO's contributions to the preparation of the United Nations Cooperation Framework
- Increase the use of country-level evaluations for adaptive management at country and regional level

30. Country-level evaluations are those that analyse the contribution of FAO to the larger United Nations Cooperation Framework, namely, the evaluation of FAO's role and work in a country, as set out in a Country Programming Framework. To date, these have been called Country Programming Evaluations, but the name may change with United Nations Reform.
31. A fully fledged Country Programme Evaluation managed by OED may not always be required or feasible. It is proposed that various forms of country-level evaluation be introduced:
- 1. Centralized (managed by OED):**
 - i. fully fledged Country Programme Evaluation: analysis of relevance, strategic positioning, partnerships and results achieved
 - ii. strategic positioning analysis only: analysis of FAO's strategic positioning and partnerships in a country, without focusing on the results achieved; this may be relevant for the preparation of the UN Country Context Analysis
 - 2. Decentralized (managed by the budget holder/FAOR):**
 - i. results-focused analysis of selected CPF components (such as outcome assessments)
 - ii. CPF mid-term reviews⁸
 - iii. evaluation of FAO's contribution to the United Nations Cooperation Framework (either as single assessment or as an inter-agency contribution).
32. The responsibility for planning and implementing decentralized country-level evaluations will lie with the FAOR. As for project evaluations, the decentralized country-level evaluations will ideally be managed by the country-level M&E officer. Modular approaches, expected standards and full guidance will be provided by OED.
33. Based on the above forms of evaluation, the following measures are proposed:
- i. OED will increase the number of centralized country programme evaluations from 8 to 12 globally per year on average, and the selection of these countries will be done in consultation with the Regional Representatives and FAORs, and in consideration of the strategic value that OED-managed country programme evaluations could bring. To the extent possible, priority will be given to large country programmes, multi-country programme evaluations, but also smaller countries of strategic importance for the region, but with low capacities for evaluation management. The timeline will be compatible with the roll-out of United Nations Cooperation Framework in these countries;
 - ii. **In the larger regions (RAF, RAP and RLC), 8-10 countries will be required to undertake a decentralized evaluation of their country programme each year (the type to be**

⁸ Some country offices are already carrying out CPF MTRs, in some cases with support from the regional office. It is proposed to standardize these processes, and to establish support from the RET for CPF MTRs (which will still be managed directly by the FAOR/Country Office).

selected from the three presented above). The countries and types of decentralized evaluation will be decided jointly by the Regional Evaluation Team (see Measure 2), the Regional Programme Leader, the Regional Representative and the FAOR.

3.2 Measure 2: Establish Regional Evaluation Teams

Objectives:

- **Enhance the role of evaluation in RBM at country and regional levels**
- **Enhance use of evaluations by regional and country stakeholders**

34. It is proposed that evaluation capacity be enhanced by establishing Regional Evaluation Teams, composed of out-posted OED staff, to better respond to the evaluation needs and requirements of regional and country stakeholders. Being based at regional level will give Regional Evaluation Teams greater opportunities to engage with members of regional and country teams and to coordinate work with the officers responsible for programming, M&E and/or knowledge management in the Regional Offices.
35. Indeed, the Regional Evaluation Teams are expected to have increased opportunities to: (i) understand the regional programmatic context and how evaluation can contribute to better decision-making, (ii) collaborate with programme managers at regional and national levels and propose innovative ways to use evaluation (for example, the production of meta-analysis aligned with programming strategic decisions), and (iii) increase capacity to manage decentralized evaluations to ensure better evaluation reports of adequate quality, learning and adaptive management at country level.
36. In this new set-up, it will be essential to maintain the independence of the Regional Evaluation Teams, while ensuring good partnership and collaboration. The Regional Evaluation Officers will remain of OED from an administrative perspective and will report to the OED Director. The Regional Evaluation Teams and Regional Office management will need to ensure that opportunities for collaboration are optimized, while also maintaining a large degree of independence. During the transition phase, OED will pay particular attention to the issue of independence and the balance between it and effective collaboration at regional and country level. Other oversight measures to ensure independence and impartiality of Regional Evaluation Teams are detailed in the longer version of this document.
37. Regional Evaluation Teams will have **seven main responsibilities**:⁹
1. Providing quality support for decentralized evaluations (project and CPF)
 2. managing OED country programme and regional project evaluations
 3. knowledge management and meta-analysis of evaluations
 4. managing inter-agency and system-wide evaluations in the region, as appropriate
 5. supporting regional and country management teams¹⁰ in (i) developing evaluation plans, (ii) embedding evaluation in RBM at country/regional level and (iii) ensuring the use of evaluation findings and follow-up to evaluations
 6. supporting the development and roll-out of the capacity-development programme

⁹ This list draws partly on the experience of the OED evaluation consultant based in the Latin America and the Caribbean region since mid-2019 (funded by OED Trust fund Budget) to support the first phase of decentralization.

¹⁰ Together with the regional M&E officer (new position, per the PWB adjustments paper)

7. preparing reports on the implementation of the evaluation plans for the Programme Committee.
38. Their guidance and support for evaluations will include all decentralized project evaluations (mid-term reviews and single-country project evaluations) and decentralized country-level evaluations. The Regional Evaluation Teams will also directly manage certain OED evaluations that are important to the regions in question.
39. The Regional Evaluation Team will also be responsible for creating a network of evaluation focal points¹¹ (including all evaluation focal points in Country, Sub-regional and Regional Offices) and for coordinating capacity-development and cross-learning initiatives under the technical supervision of OED.
40. Experience in other organizations shows that if promotion of an evaluative culture and the use of decentralized evaluation by programme managers are a significant aspect of decentralization, regional evaluation staff needs sufficient seniority. Based on the size of the FAO portfolio in the regions, it is proposed that the decentralization process start with the out-posting of P4 and P3-level Evaluation Officers in the Regional Office for Africa (RAF), the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (RAP) and the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (RLC), with the addition of a P5-level officer in RAF, due to the large volume of FAO's work in Africa. In addition, it is likely that each Regional Evaluation Team will include a number of OED consultants, especially in the first phase of decentralization.
41. For the Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa (RNE) and the Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (REU), a P4 evaluation officer at OED headquarters will handle the tasks of the Regional Evaluation Officer. This officer may be out-posted to one of these two Regional Offices at a later stage if deemed appropriate and if resources allow.
42. It is proposed that the out-posting of OED staff be undertaken with no implications for the overall OED budget. It will, therefore, have implications for OED staffing capacity at headquarters. OED currently has 18 staff members in Rome (and none in the decentralized offices). Under the proposed measures, it would have 11 staff at headquarters and 7 staff in the three Regional Offices (three in RAF, two in RLC and two in RAP). The out-posting of the Regional Evaluation Teams will begin with RAF. The establishment of the Regional Evaluation Teams in other regions will follow after the transition phase, taking into account the lessons learned during that phase.

3.3 Measure 3: Enhance capacity to support decentralized evaluation and the use of evaluation

43. Developing evaluation capacity at the country and regional levels will be instrumental to the success of decentralization. Ensuring the quality of decentralized evaluations will determine the effectiveness of the process.
44. Those involved in managing evaluations at the decentralized level (budget holders, evaluation focal points, M&E consultants, etc.) will need adequate skills to manage the process of commissioning, maintaining oversight of implementation and use of evaluations. The coordination of capacity development is usually handled by OED on an ongoing basis, given

¹¹ Evaluation focal points have already been nominated by the FAORs in almost all Country Offices and Headquarters departments. For each decentralized evaluation, an evaluation manager will be nominated by the budget holder. The evaluation manager may be the evaluation focal point, or another person, depending on capacity and the involvement of the evaluation focal point in the specific project/programme being evaluated.

the likely rapid turnover of trained staff, especially when they are not under long-term contract (which is the case for at least half of the evaluation focal points in FAO).

Elements to be addressed in the new FAO Evaluation Policy

- Integration and synergy between various types of evaluation (thematic, country programme, project)
- More systematic learning evaluation products (cluster evaluations, meta-analysis, synthesis)
- Planning, coverage and reporting for decentralized evaluations
- How FAO will monitor the development of evaluation plans and the degree to which they are implemented, and the quality of the resulting evaluations (OED should report on the delivery of the plan for instituting the decentralized evaluation system and the quality/use of decentralized evaluation to Senior Management and the Programme Committee)
- Development of an assessment system to monitor the quality of centralized and decentralized evaluations (*post hoc* quality assessment)
- Governance at country level, reporting and feedback on country programme evaluations, coverage norms for country programme evaluations
- Thresholds for mandatory project evaluation may be revised in the FAO Evaluation Policy in line with new coverage requirements for decentralized evaluations

45. **What has OED done so far?** Following the decentralization of all project mid-term evaluations, in January 2019, OED developed a capacity-development plan for all decentralized offices. The first phase focused on information dissemination and was conducted between September and December 2019.
46. OED launched the second phase of the plan in January 2020, including training workshops in the Regional Offices. OED has also been using capacity-development activities to gather information on the capacity needs of decentralized offices, as well as to organize discussions and get feedback from colleagues on how to better use evaluations in the Organization. The feedback and outcomes of these discussions will form the basis of the third phase of the plan, which will start with the establishment of a Regional Evaluation Team in RAF.

4. Governance of decentralized evaluations

47. Well-defined evaluation governance is key to the successful implementation of evaluation decentralization. Good governance includes aspects such as: clear roles and responsibilities as to the planning, implementation and follow-up of an evaluation; a solid quality assurance system and sufficient resources to conduct impartial and rigorous evaluation. This chapter aims to define the broad outlines of decentralized evaluation governance. This will be detailed further in a future Action Plan, together with procedures for evaluation.

4.1 Roles and responsibilities in decentralized evaluations

Table 1: Roles and responsibilities in decentralized evaluations

OED headquarters
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidate evaluation plans, including decentralized evaluations, and prepare progress reports on implementation, including reports on the quality of project evaluations, for the Programme Committee. • Develop and implement the evaluation capacity-development programme. • Ensure capacity is in place to support decentralized evaluation both at headquarters and in the regions.
Regional representative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise Country Offices and OED on the Country Office evaluation plan (country programme evaluations and project evaluations). • Oversee implementation of the evaluation plan by Country Offices. • Ensure that planning for and subsequent use of evaluations are embedded in the RBM system and project cycle, including the necessary resources. • Consolidate regional reports on the implementation of decentralized evaluation plans and report to the FAO Evaluation Committee. • Ensure that Evaluation is a standing item in Regional Management meetings. • Ensure that FAORs are held accountable for their evaluation responsibilities (for example, through the performance management system). • Promote an evaluation culture in the Regional and Country Offices.
OED Regional Evaluation Team
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide quality support to decentralized evaluations. • Management OED Country Programme evaluations and regional project evaluations. • Oversee knowledge management and meta-analysis of evaluations. • Manage inter-agency and system-wide evaluations in the region as appropriate. • Support regional and country management teams in their evaluation- and RBM-related tasks. • Support the development and roll-out of the capacity-development programme. • Prepare reports on implementation of the evaluation plans for the Programme Committee.
FAORs and budget holders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an evaluation plan. • Appoint an evaluation focal point. • Assume final responsibility for the evaluation report and its dissemination. • Assume responsibility for following up on evaluation recommendations with relevant stakeholders.
Country-level Evaluation Focal Point
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist the FAOR/budget holder in developing the evaluation plan.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage evaluations. • Facilitate follow-up and use of evaluations by all relevant stakeholders. • Liaise with Regional Evaluation Officers.
Programme Committee
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive an annual progress report on the implementation of decentralized evaluations. • Provide guidance to Management based on evaluation results.

4.2 Reporting and oversight

48. It is suggested that all Regional Representatives be invited to the Evaluation Committee once a year to report on and discuss evaluation plans and their implementation, all activities relating to evaluation in the countries of their region and the progress being made in embedding evaluation into RBM. This should take place before the Programme Committee meeting, which will discuss a report submitted by OED on the implementation of Country Office evaluation plans, a progress update on the coverage and implementation status of decentralization and an independent report of the quality of decentralized evaluations.
49. At country level, FAORs/budget holders will be held accountable for their new evaluation responsibilities through the performance management system. They will report to the Regional Representative on the implementation of the country evaluation plan. It is also proposed that evaluation be discussed annually at regional level, as a standing item on evaluation in Regional Management meetings. The evaluation session will be led by OED.

4.3 Quality assurance and *post hoc* quality assessment

50. Maintaining the quality of decentralized evaluation is a key challenge and instrumental to the success of decentralizing evaluations. Four distinct elements need to be considered when developing a quality assurance and assessment system.

Setting standards for decentralized evaluations

51. OED will be responsible for setting standards for decentralized evaluations. Adjustments will have to be made to OED evaluation standards to take into account the particularities of decentralized evaluations. Decentralized evaluations are not independent since the required condition of organizational independence is not in place. However, they must meet the requirement of impartiality and there are good practices in place to facilitate this.

Quality assurance

52. The evaluation manager appointed by the budget holder (in most cases, the FAOR) will be responsible for ensuring the quality of the evaluation process and products. They will draft the terms of reference, select an external team with no prior involvement in the programme or project, guide the evaluation process, review the draft, share it for comment with relevant stakeholders, submit the final report and request a Management Response. The evaluation manager will be guided by their Regional Evaluation Officers, in particular, on the impartiality of the evaluation team, the quality of terms of reference and the quality of final reports.

Post hoc quality assessment

53. There is currently no systematic *post-hoc* assessment of evaluation, although assessments of evaluations were carried out on a sample basis as part of the 2017 Evaluation of the Evaluation Function (FAO, 2017). To add to the credibility and continuous improvement of FAO's evaluations, OED will establish a *post hoc* assessment system. It will assess all completed evaluations, both centralized and decentralized, measuring them against certain standards, and submit a summary of the assessment outcomes to the Programme Committee. This function will be subcontracted to an external entity to ensure greater impartiality.

Elements to be addressed in the new FAO Evaluation Policy

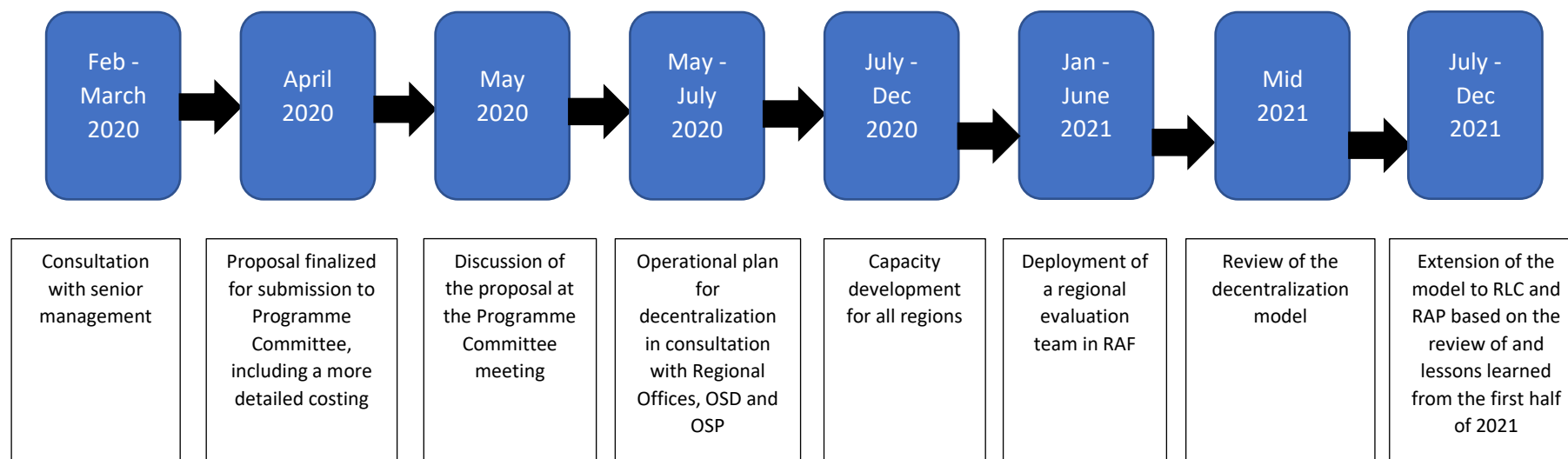
- Integration of and synergy between various types of evaluation (thematic, Country Programme evaluations, projects)

5. Financial resources

54. There is no major additional cost associated with this proposal. The number of OED staff positions will remain the same. Funding for decentralized project evaluations and their management will come from project evaluation budgets and be transferred to those responsible, as is currently the case. However, there will be an increase in centralized OED-led country programme evaluations, as well as country-level programme reviews carried out by FAO Country Offices. Both the centralized country programme evaluations and the decentralized programme reviews will be funded by the OED budget and may require additional funding. It is also proposed that OED provide resources to cover the cost of managing these evaluations where there is no M&E capacity in the Country Office.
55. Certain investment costs will need to be incurred, especially during the initial phase of implementation, including: consultants to support Regional Evaluation Teams, capacity-development activities and an initial funding contribution for Country Offices with weak or no M&E capacity. These investment costs will be funded by the OED Evaluation Trust Fund.
56. A phased implementation approach is planned for the proposal, including a pilot phase, during which costs will be monitored. If implementation is expanded, a detailed budget and funding plan will be developed.

6. Tentative timeline

57. In relation to measures 1 and 2 (the decentralization of certain project evaluations and the out-posting of OED officers to Regional Offices), it is proposed that a **pilot phase** be started **in only one region**. Lessons learned during that pilot would be used to adapt the model and expand it to other regions. Given the need and high number of FAO projects under way, RAF is recommended for the pilot phase. The capacity-development plan (measure 3) would continue to be carried out in all regions.
58. During this period, it will be essential to start work on a comprehensive **Evaluation Policy**, with the first draft to be presented at the November Programme Committee meeting. The policy will be finalized based on the lessons learned in the pilot phase in RAF.



Capacity development should be continued. (Jan 2020 – end of 2021)



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