

Country Programme Evaluation Series

[01/2024](#)

# Evaluation of FAO's Subregional Office for the Caribbean

## 2018–2022

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Rome, 2024

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		Actions to be taken, and/or comments about partial acceptance or rejection	Responsible unit	Time frame	Further funding required (Y or N)
<p><b>Recommendation 1.</b></p> <p>FAO SLC, in collaboration with FAO RLC and the relevant units at headquarters, should continue to improve its administrative and operative efficiency.</p> <p>While improving, the administrative and operative procedures in FAO remain a major limitation for FAO SLC. This affects not only the efficiency of its initiatives but also the achievement of project results, the motivation of personnel and FAO's reputation with partners (see Conclusions 4 and 8). To improve this, FAO SLC should develop standard operating procedures and develop action plans to make procurement more efficient, consolidate the human resources team and enhance project efficiency. FAO SLC cannot do this in isolation. It needs action from FAO RLC and headquarters to implement this improvement based on recognizing the specific context of the various multi-country offices in the Caribbean. This evaluation suggests the implementation of the following agreed upon action from the recent Office of the Inspector General Audit of FAO SLC, with additional observations based on the current evaluation.</p> <p>i. Agreed action 1. FAO SLC is to: i) streamline administrative processes for efficiencies; ii) define and communicate roles and responsibilities of administrative personnel, taking into account the need for the segregation of duties. The streamlining of administrative processes need to be done together with FAO RLC and headquarters to identify administrative bottlenecks that specifically affect FAO SLC and adjust these at the most appropriate level (global, regional, subregional); iii) request a reclassification of staffing positions based on the office's needs. The reclassification of staffing positions should be based on not only FAO SLC needs but also those of the other three offices in the subregion. This should also consider the appointment of a Deputy SRC who can oversee administration and operations.</p>	Partially accepted	<p>Administration: The SLC Office has accepted the two actions listed from the OIG Audit in 2022 and is actively working towards their completion.</p> <p>Additional suggestions are outside this Office's control.</p> <p>In addition, there are corporate mechanisms in place led by headquarters and RLC, which SLC are actively involved in and will continue to be so.</p> <p>We would also like to point out that "SLC's human resources policies" is a factually incorrect term, as all HR policies are managed centrally by CSH in headquarters.</p> <p>Procurement: The SLC Office has accepted the action listed from the OIG Audit in 2022 and is actively working towards its completion.</p> <p>In addition, we have an International Procurement Officer who is aligning SLC's activities with CSLP in headquarters.</p> <p>LOAs: The SLC Office has accepted the action listed from the OIG Audit in 2022 and is actively working towards its completion.</p> <p>In addition, a number of activities are taking place within SLC to ensure better management of partners and LOA performance.</p>	SLC		

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<p>ii. Agreed action 5. FAO SLC is to: i) implement control procedures over human resources functions to ensure transparent recruitment processes, proper background checks and pay rates in accordance with the established salary scale; and ii) establish personnel development plans.</p> <p>The Evaluation Team considers that, in addition to control procedures to ensure transparent recruitment processes, FAO SLC's human resources policies need to concentrate on the quality and speed of recruitment and the retention of personnel. To increase the quality and speed of recruitment, it should be recognized that in the Caribbean, there is a small pool of candidates that is also tapped into by competing agencies. Standard labour conditions at FAO are not competitive, particularly for non-staff positions. FAO-specific rules are not easily applied in the Caribbean context (language requirements, minimum number of different candidates). Therefore, FAO SLC should identify what elements of human resources policies are barriers to the fast recruitment of high-quality personnel. Adjustments to human resources procedures are suggested to overcome these barriers. On personnel retention, personnel development plans should include training opportunities, clear pathways for promotion or progress from non-staff to staff positions, and the guarantee of longer-term engagement – independent of contract break rules. Personnel retention will also be promoted when the overall working atmosphere, team collaboration and workload are optimal.</p> <p>i. Agreed action 6. FAO SLC is to: i) streamline the procurement process; and ii) implement measures for effective procurement planning to increase the competitiveness of the procurement process.</p> <p>The Evaluation Team observes that streamlining the procurement process is as much of a responsibility for FAO RLC and headquarters as it is for FAO SLC. In fact, FAO SLC needs to improve the planning and preparation of procurement processes and the execution of approved processes. At</p>					

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<p>the same time, other involved parties need to ensure efficient assessment and approval, taking into account the specific context of the Caribbean (small pool of providers, logistical challenges, capacity challenges among partner agencies).</p> <p>i. Agreed action 11. FAO SLC is to: i) identify and address causes of delays in project implementation, including the management of letters of agreement (LOAs); and ii) select service providers for LOAs in a competitive manner, unless duly justified.</p> <p>The Evaluation Team observes that: i) addressing the causes of delay in project implementation, even if these are beyond the control of FAO SLC, need to be analysed and addressed opportunely by project managers. This should be standard practice in an adaptive management approach. To make adaptive management more efficient, it is suggested that the Project Manager, the LTO and the Budget Holder have short communication lines, preferably all at FAO SLC but taking care not to overburden senior staff with different project management tasks; and ii) it should be considered that the pool of service providers in many Caribbean countries is small, so a competitive process is only effective in counted cases.</p>					
<p><b>Recommendation 2.</b></p> <p>FAO should further implement the reform of the regional structure in Latin America and the Caribbean, considering the specific limitations and opportunities of FAO SLC.</p> <p>The functions and roles of Subregional Offices within the FAO structure have evolved over time and become multifaceted. Indeed, these are neither well-defined nor understood (Conclusions 1, 5 and 7). Within the reform of FAO's regional structure, an in-depth analysis of the Subregional Office is underway, which has shown that those offices that serve multiple countries (like FAO SLC) have an unequal high demand</p>	Partially accepted	<p>RLC: accepted.</p> <p>i. Assign resources to hire an Policy officer that can act as the Deputy SLC.</p> <p>ii. Create (or strengthen) technical information and knowledge sharing platforms taking care of the languages and examples from smaller countries (example, the regional consultation for LARC 38,</p>			

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<p>originating from its three roles (multicountry representation, technical, liaison and partnerships). Therefore, this evaluation suggests the implementation of the following proposed changes in the draft “rethinking” report, with additional observations from the Evaluation Team.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. In the short term, appoint Deputy SRCs who will assume responsibilities to support the SRC on work at the Subregional Office and strengthen support to the FAOR. This aligns with Recommendation 1. The deputy will imply greater capacity in the Subregional Office for liaison, communications and advocacy. This should also value the opportunities of the Caribbean, for instance, the short communication lines to decision makers and the relatively easy agreement to act as a block in international debates.</li> <li>i. Create (or strengthen) technical information and knowledge sharing platforms. In Latin America and the Caribbean, this should be sensitive to the smaller countries in terms of language, examples used, and accessibility and dissemination mechanisms.</li> <li>ii. Explore options for a revamped mobility programme (headquarters, regional offices, Subregional Offices) or secondments with the aim of building further capacities at the subregional, national and field levels.</li> <li>iii. Delegate some technical expertise functions to the Subregional Office with a mandate to operate beyond the subregion.</li> <li>iv. Apply a programmatic model for LTOs and enable consultants to act as LTOs. This should only be done with senior technical consultants who have clear, long-term prospects to work with FAO SLC.</li> </ul>		<p>the FAO Transforms Fair, training curses on project cycle, supporting mission etc.).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>iii. Delegate some technical expertise functions to the Subregional Office with a mandate to operate beyond the subregion.</li> <li>iv. Apply a programmatic model for LTOs and enable consultants to act as LTOs.</li> <li>v. Increase capacity in Subregional Offices for resource mobilization (especially from independent fiscal institutions) and partnerships.</li> <li>vi. For discussion: mobility programme is under headquarters development.</li> </ul>			

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v. Greater capacity in Subregional Offices for resource mobilization (especially from independent fiscal institutions) and partnerships. There is good capacity for resource mobilization but fewer funding sources than elsewhere. Therefore, resource mobilization, by default, depends on coordination with FAO RLC and headquarters to engage with other partners. Alternatively, opportunities in the Caribbean have the ease of developing multicountry programmes.					
<p><b>Recommendation 3.</b></p> <p>FAO RLC should review the current mechanisms and processes in place to provide support to English-, Dutch- and French-speaking Caribbean countries, including those served by FAO SLC and FAO SLM.</p> <p>This evaluation has shown that the relationship between FAO SLC and RLC is close, but there are areas of improvement at the level of programme management, administration and operations (see Conclusion 5). With the reform of FAO's regional structure in an advanced stage of implementation, FAO SLC is now an integral part of the regional office. Considering this reform, the Office of the Inspector General Audit of FAO SLC recommended clarifying the roles and responsibilities of FAO SLC and, accordingly, provide guidance to FAO SLC on how to improve its support to Country Offices in the subregion. This effort should focus on not only FAO SLC but also RLC and other offices, such as SLM, that support FAO's work in the region. It should assess formal roles and informal coordination mechanisms, define tensions, inefficiencies and bottlenecks, and agree upon principles and mechanisms for efficient collaboration. It should strengthen the roles of different offices and responsible personnel, particularly to enforce the coordinating and supporting role of FAO RLC and the policy and liaison role of FAO SLC. This review should target not only administration, operations and monitoring arrangements but also the development and implementation</p>	Partially accepted	<p>As part of the regional reform, RLC will clarify the roles and responsibilities of FAO SLC and, accordingly, provide guidance to FAO SLC on how to improve its support to Country Offices in the subregion and agree upon principles and mechanisms for efficient collaboration.</p> <p>RLC will aim for greater inclusion of more Caribbean personnel in RLC.</p> <p>RLC will discuss the coverage of work in Haiti.</p> <p>While the recruitment of personnel considers level C of English and French as one additional skills, Dutch is not an official language for FAO.</p>			

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of projects. Given the distinct thematic priorities, different ways of working and logistical challenges in the Caribbean, FAO SLC needs flexibility in project development (including its alignment to Regional Initiatives) and in their choice of technical support (not necessarily looking to FAO RLC as a first option but being able to reach out directly to headquarters or other regions). Further dialogue should be stimulated between the Regional Initiatives and the SRC's priorities to find complementarities that support FAO SLC's work in the subregion and build on positive lessons of collaboration. To better reflect the alignment to the subregion at FAO RLC, it is important to aim for greater inclusion of more Caribbean personnel at FAO RLC offices and discuss the coverage of work in Haiti.					
<p><b>Recommendation 4.</b></p> <p>FAO SLC should implement a portfolio development strategy that targets the response quality to country priorities, work continuity in thematic areas and geographic coverage.</p> <p>In the last two biennia, FAO SLC has shown consistent portfolio development with a slightly increased budget (not considering Haiti), an important number of trust fund projects (particularly from the GEF, the GCF, the European Union and Southern bilateral donors) and transformational results (see Conclusion 12). It has improved in developing technical and social innovations in areas such as value chains, protected agriculture and DRM. Further, it has improved continuity in lines of work and in the inclusion of gender, youth and minority groups. This level of innovation and thematic continuity should advance while improving assistance to less served Member States (mostly the OECS). The budget size of projects to be developed need to carefully consider the low absorptive capacity of Member States, the overextended senior technical personnel and low agency fees for several major funders (including the GEF and the GCF). While the ambition level may increase for projects in several countries and at a subregional level, it should</p>	Partially accepted	<p>FAO-SLC has a resource mobilization strategy that aims at enabling FAO to respond effectively to all SLC country priorities and work continuity. Over the biennium 2020–2021 USD 13.7 million were mobilized across the SLC countries and in the biennium 2022–2023 the resources mobilized so far are USD 36.5 million.</p> <p>Our portfolio development, however, does not depend only on resource mobilization but also on our leveraging of other partnerships and consistent dialogue with key national, regional and international stakeholders.</p> <p>While we have been active in building such dialogue and partnership, we have not, so far, developed a written strategy. We undertake to develop such a strategy in</p>	SLC	By March 2024	No

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match the absorptive capacity of countries and partner organizations. This implies that FAO should accept that the ratio extra budgetary funds and regular budget will always remain lower at FAO SLC.		further support of our portfolio development.			
<p><b>Recommendation 5.</b> FAO SLC and RLC should consider liaison alternatives with countries that do not have a resident representative.</p> <p>Serving as FAO Representation to six Member States from a subregional hub in Barbados implies challenges to policy support, communication, project development and implementation. While this is managed well by FAO SLC and FAO is the partner of choice for all countries, there is room for improvement in the connection of FAO SLC to the countries where there is no resident or permanent representation (see Conclusions 1 and 9). This evaluation considers that the approach to coordination with these countries through national correspondents has to be revised because there is high turnover, unclear tasks and a risk of conflicts of interest. Different options could be explored, all with pros and cons, which should be taken into account when revising alternatives for the current, imperfect structure.</p> <p>vi. Improve the current system of National Coordinator. This implies a more carefully enforced National Coordinator strategy. The National Coordinator position should be more attractive to candidates (better working conditions, equipment, transport, office). Training and communications can also be improved. Team building among National Coordinators and clearer arrangements with their home organizations will avoid conflicts of interest and being overburdened by tasks. This will also promote continuity. While this is the easiest, low-hanging fruit option, it has its limits and does not resolve some fundamental challenges of the National Coordinator system.</p> <p>vii. Provide full resident representation in each country. Although this would be ideal and fair to the countries, it is</p>	Rejected	<p>We are pleased with the recognition that FAO-SLC is the partner of choice for the six OECS countries covered by the Barbados MCO despite having no physical presence in these countries. The effort that this has required from the limited personnel in the SLC Office should not be under-estimated. More robust support on the ground in each of the countries would be beneficial to the growing FAO programme in these countries, however, none of the 5 components of this recommendation is under the control of this Office, therefore we cannot accept this recommendation.</p> <p>We note that SLC has undertaken several measures aimed at improving the system of the National Correspondents (note that the incorrect terminology is used in the recommendation point viii).</p> <p>We have established annual meetings with the national correspondents to interact with the whole SLC Team; we have instituted bi-weekly meetings with the SLC Programme Team; we have standardized the on-boarding process for new NCs; they are included in regular SLC personnel meetings. We will continue to seek additional ways to enhance their functioning.</p>			



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<p>viii. the most expensive option. Recognizing that each office will end up looking for project funds to keep supporting its operations, this might lead to competition among many different Country Offices and FAO SLC for limited opportunities in the subregion.</p> <p>ix. Establish additional joint representation for other groups of countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Dominica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada, Saint Lucia). This might bring the resident representation closer to country issues and lower the pressure on the SRC. At the same time, it is still costly and does not really resolve the root problems of having non-resident representation in many countries.</p> <p>x. Set up Assistant FAORs in each country (as done at the FAO Subregional Office for the Pacific Islands). An FAO Representative can be national personnel with a similar experience level as National Coordinator but not directly related to a government agency. The role can also have prospects for long-term appointment. Although this option is less expensive than creating additional offices, it is still costly and requires additional funding.</p> <p>xi. Use United Nations coordination or other United Nations agency offices as FAO liaison. This approach, used by other agencies such as the UNEP through the UNDP offices in many countries, creates a formal, diplomatic United Nations link to the country and will stimulate collaboration with other United Nations agencies under the umbrella of the MSDCF. However, in this setting, it will be challenging to represent the technical areas under FAO's mission.</p>					

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communication to FAO Representation (the IICA model). This might be the cheapest option but puts additional responsibilities on project personnel, and there is a risk of misinterpretation regarding their role. This comes with a reputational risk (in case of inexperienced personnel), and there may not always be good project personnel available in all countries.					
<p><b>Recommendation 6.</b></p> <p>FAO SLC management should increase the collaborative working culture by applying mechanisms to promote multidisciplinary collaboration and coordination among FAO SLC personnel.</p> <p>While FAO SLC is generally considered a good place to work, there is not much interpersonal collaboration. Technical and administrative teams tend to work in silos (see Conclusion 10). FAO SLC can enhance its dynamic work atmosphere through relatively simple communication tools and informal coordination mechanisms. FAO SLC management should actively promote interpersonal contact moments, both in-person and online, such as thematic meetings, brown bag lunches and joint field missions.</p>	Accepted	<p>There is increasing collaboration among SLC personnel and it must continue to increase. Such collaboration is particularly important in SLC given the fact that the support for most countries is derived from “fragments” of several sub-regional projects. Achieving meaningful impact behooves is to enable a high degree of collaboration among various project teams. There are several examples of the concrete benefits, in terms of efficiency and impact, arising from such interpersonal collaboration. Additional measures being taken to strengthen the collaborative working culture include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. re-establishing regular country programme review meetings;</li> <li>ii. periodic “brown-bag lunch” thematic meetings;</li> <li>iii. recognizing effective collaboration in regular personnel meetings; and</li> <li>iv. joint development of proposals for resource mobilization.</li> </ul>	SLC	Now – September 2024	No

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