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FAO work in the Greater Horn of Africa (2004-2007)

Evaluation of the FAO emergency and rehabilitation assistance in the Greater Horn of Africa (2004-2007)

At the time of the evaluation, the Greater Horn of Africa was one of the most food insecure regions of the world. Its population had more than doubled since 1974, further increasing the pressure on resources. In addition, widespread insecurity in Somalia, southern Sudan and northern Uganda in the past two decades had displaced large populations, prevented access to land and services as well as undermined customary practices and institutions.

The evaluation reviewed FAO's emergency and rehabilitation programme in collaboration with Member Governments and partners in Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, southern Sudan and northern Uganda from 2004 to 2007. The programme had witnessed a threefold expansion during the period under review, amounting to USD 240 million between 2004 and 2006.

Findings and Conclusions

Programme Response: FAO had significantly increased its presence and diversified its emergency and rehabilitation response from a programme formerly dominated by seeds and tools distribution. The evaluation identified a number of components, namely: knowledge projects, including support to early warning and food security information systems, technical assistance on land tenure and land and water information management; agricultural projects mainly consisting of seeds and tools distribution, as well as cassava propagation, integrated pest management and rehabilitation and development of water resources and irrigation schemes; livestock and fisheries projects, dominated by animal health interventions but also including training of Community Animal Health Workers (CAHWs), prevention and control of transboundary diseases, support to aquaculture and fisheries, and redistribution of small ruminants; support to the livelihoods of HIV and AIDS affected households; and FAO's mandated role of coordination within the agriculture and food security sector in humanitarian emergencies.

Strategic Planning was mainly achieved through the Plan of Action (POA) for the Greater Horn of Africa intended to complement the humanitarian appeals process. It provides a strategic framework for food security which advocates for "connectedness" between emergency and development assistance, challenging conventional wisdom of donors and other international agencies to separately allocate resources to "emergencies", "recovery/transition", and "development". National POAs were under review in Ethiopia, Somalia and Uganda. contractual obligations was found insufficient.

Findings and Conclusions cont.

FAO Organizational Structure and Operational Capacity, including technical capacity, were not strengthened to match the increase in scale and diversification of projects in the region, particularly at field level. Although relationships between the FAORs and Emergency Coordination Units (ECUs) at country level were generally effective, different lines of reporting led to some difficulties and tensions. Reliance on short-term extra-budgetary support to finance ECUs undermined any long-term approach to develop operational capacity: this also led to high staff turnover, which negatively affected the quality of interventions. Key regional institutional changes were the establishment of the Regional Emergency Office for Africa (REOA) in Nairobi and the FAO Sub-Regional Office for East Africa (SFE) in Addis Ababa. The evaluation concluded that their respective roles can well be complementary, however the centralized and vertical nature of the Organization often leads to inefficiencies and at times discourages sharing of information and best practice.

Partnerships: FAO worked directly with more than 50 different international and local NGOs, mainly for input distribution but also for sectoral strategy development. A major constraint to these collaborations was the use of Letters of Agreement, a contractual tool that does not reflect partnering among equals as expected by some donors and NGOs. FAO could better link emergency operations with government services at field level as well as taking advantage of regional research centres.

Relevance, Effectiveness and Impact: With a few exceptions, the evaluation found that the emergency programme in the region focused too much on the immediate consequences of vulnerability rather than tackling long-term, deep-rooted causes of food insecurity and vulnerability. A notable achievement was the development of the Integrated Humanitarian and Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) by the FSAU Somalia: this has since been introduced to other countries by FAO. Early warning often does not translate into early response, partly due to a lack of national contingency plans and follow-up funding. Poor timeliness was a key weakness in the agricultural sector, mainly attributed to inadequate logistical and operational capacity in the field and dependence on appeals which were poorly synchronised with cropping seasons. Overall seed aid resulted in higher food production and farm incomes. Animal health interventions were found very relevant

with some shortcomings in the consistency of technical assistance. Support networks of CAHWs were also effective for nomadic herders, although they tended to be poorly connected with national animal health systems. One of the most effective actions by FAO was probably its contribution to the lifting of the livestock export ban imposed by the Arabian Peninsula.

Gender and Equity: A number of activities or opportunities were identified where women and female-headed households could be targeted. However, there was no systematic attempt to mainstream gender throughout project cycles. Targeting inputs is difficult to achieve effectively in the Horn of Africa. The evaluation acknowledged the tensions that can result from targeting, which communities try to avoid, and considered it only worthwhile when distributing costly items.

Recommendations

■ Information Systems and Knowledge Projects:

Institutional coherence in food security information systems for emergencies and development as well as stronger links between food security and livestock related information systems need to be sought. Information systems that are of value for both emergency and developmental understanding should be further supported. Early warning and information systems should make greater use of indigenous knowledge in order to become more relevant to local decision-making. In addition, there is a need for the development and improvement of methodologies for food security assessments to ensure timeliness, quality and relevance.

■ **Resource Mobilization:** Advocacy for a greater proportion of humanitarian funding to focus on livelihood interventions should be continued. Active engagement in developing medium-term strategies determining priorities in addressing chronic food insecurity is recommended. The mobilization and coordination of resources at regional level should continue. Also, in order to ensure timely and appropriate responses to livelihoods crises in the region, coordinated response analyses, emergency preparedness plans, contingency funding mechanisms and strategic reserves of key equipment should be promoted.

■ **Programme Response:** A thorough analysis of production and livelihoods systems should be conducted to study the long-term, root causes of food insecurity in the Horn of Africa, and promote the use of livelihood information in programme response. Comprehensive need assessments rather than mere seed need assessments should be the basis of FAO and other agencies' interventions. Agricultural inputs should be distributed when truly necessary, supplied sooner and through more efficient distribution processes. Where they are distributed regularly, procurement should be handled locally in order to support the local economy. Water interventions should be expanded. A review of the various CAHWs networks should be conducted to re-enforce existing networks through training and better integration into national animal health systems.

■ **Partnership and Coordination:** Partnerships should be developed more strategically, particularly with government partners that have technical competences,

which FAO can strengthen or draw upon. Technical capacities at regional level should be engaged with more extensively. Partnership agreements with NGOs should more accurately reflect respective contributions and obligations. Also, the FAO lead coordination role should be capitalized on through promoting more sharing of sound analyses and good practice between countries and actors in the region.

■ **Institutional Capacity and Priorities:** Regular funding for the core functions of "stand alone" ECUs needs to be secured over the long term. The Sub-Regional Office for East Africa (SFE) must be mandated to provide technical support and clearance for field operations, and staff composition should reflect the characteristics of the region. The Regional Emergency Office for Africa (REOA) should support ECUs and its role and composition should be reviewed annually by TCE, Emergency Coordinators, FAORs and decentralized offices. A review of human resources required by FAO in each country, reflecting national priorities, should be conducted in order to develop a more diversified skill and gender base in ECUs. National staff should form part of management and have a greater decision making and coordination role than is currently the case. To ensure that livelihoods, gender and HIV analysis contributes to the design of all programme interventions, internal guidelines, training materials and best practice should be applied.

Management response to the evaluation

Management accepted, although with some caution for some, almost all the recommendations made by the Evaluation and was pleased to note some were already being implemented. Management largely agreed with the findings, stressed that continued efforts will be necessary to comply with many of the recommendations and highlighted that in the response to an emergency, donors still favour funding immediate impact actions, such as the provision of seeds and tools.

The Programme Committee appreciated the quality and clarity of the evaluation, and recognized the difficulty of working in post-conflict environments as well as the importance of integrating the political and practical dimensions in analysing the complexity of the situations and the role that FAO can reasonably play. The Committee felt that some of the recommendations were not fully realistic, particularly as too many had financing implications that the Organization was not in a position to fill. Longer-term institutional arrangements to strengthen this area of work should take voluntary funding models into consideration, as nearly all of FAO's emergency and rehabilitation work is funded by extra-budgetary support.

It was also noted that the Organization had made solid improvements in its activities in the Horn of Africa, among which a more strategic approach through Plans of Action, systematic fielding of emergency coordinators, active partnerships with NGOs and a commitment to address transboundary issues. More emphasis should be given to consolidation and sustainability of results, preparedness and safety net mechanisms to address chronic poverty and vulnerability, as some of the countries are moving toward rehabilitation and development. If FAO's work is to be diversified and expanded and timely technical support is to be delivered, appropriate expertise will be required in the region.

FAO Governing Bodies' conclusions (Programme Committee)

References

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