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Organisation des Nations  
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Объединенных Наций

Organización de las  
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منظمة  
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للأمم المتحدة

## PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

### Hundred and Seventeenth Session

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### 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 116<sup>th</sup> 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..

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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.”<sup>1</sup> The Charter for the FAO Office of Evaluation, providing the policy framework for the evaluation function in FAO, was approved by 139<sup>th</sup> 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:

<b>Goal:</b>	
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.

<sup>1</sup> 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 2010-2019<sup>2</sup> 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,<sup>3</sup> 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

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<sup>2</sup> C 2013/7

<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

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 <sup>5</sup> resolutions, UNEG <sup>6</sup> 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?

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

<sup>5</sup> Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR)

<sup>6</sup> 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 2015-2017<sup>7</sup> (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 organizations<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> PC 116/5

<sup>8</sup> 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