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Procedures for financing the evaluation of initiatives funded by voluntary contributions

FAO evaluation policy guidance

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For further information on this report, please contact:

Director, OED
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla 1, 00153
Rome, Italy
Email: evaluation@fao.org

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Acronyms

CL	FAO Council
E&R	Emergency and Rehabilitation
FPC	Field Programme Circular
GEF	Global Environment Fund
MUL	Multi-donor
OED	FAO Office of Evaluation
PC	FAO Programme Committee
TCE	FAO Emergency and Rehabilitation Division
TCSR	Donor Liaison and Resource Mobilization Team
TF	Trust Fund

1 Background

1. FAO evaluations of initiatives funded by voluntary contributions are directly used by stakeholders including managers, recipient organizations and resource partners, as well as any other directly concerned, at country, regional and global level. They are opportunities for learning and providing accountability on what represents half or more of the Organization's financial resources. These evaluations are also important building blocks in evaluations of FAO's work at country, thematic and strategy level, and will continue to be so also in the context of integrated financial resources for the achievement of corporate objectives.¹

2. FAO Governing Bodies have consistently expressed support for systematic evaluation of all of the Organization's activities, independently from the source of funding, and the evaluation of initiatives funded by voluntary contributions has repeatedly been a topic of discussion for the Council and the Programme Committee. In June 2007, based on an analysis by FAO Evaluation Service,² the Council provided clear guidance on evaluation arrangements for all 'extra-budgetary work',³ quoted in Box 1:

Box 1. FAO Council report CL 132, June 2007, paragraph 76

FAO Council emphasised the importance of the systematic evaluation of the extra-budgetary work of the Organization, and endorsed the following arrangements for evaluation of extra-budgetary work, as stated in paragraph 39 of the Programme Committee report: "a) the inclusion of a mandatory budget line for evaluation in all extra-budgetary projects on a published scale. Two Trust Fund pool accounts would be established for this purpose: one for emergency and rehabilitation projects, and another for technical cooperation for development projects. The exception to this would be those projects of technical cooperation for development over US\$ 4 million which would continue to be evaluated separately; and b) the institutionalisation of the arrangements for evaluation of emergency and rehabilitation programmes and the extension of similar arrangements to projects of technical cooperation for development. While respecting the independence of evaluation and the role of the Evaluation Service in this, these institutional relationships would include comprehensive dialogues with stakeholders, in particular funders and partner countries, on the selection of evaluations and their conduct."

3. Since then, and in particular in 2011 and 2012, the Programme Committee repeatedly stressed the importance of systematic evaluation of these initiatives, invited all Member Countries to comply with the corporate policy and suggested that FAO adopt a more proactive approach with donors on this issue.⁴

4. The 'Trust Fund for the Evaluations of Emergency and Rehabilitation Operations'⁵ was established in July 2006, to pool the contributions for evaluation from all FAO projects funded through the emergency and rehabilitation (E&R) channel; rules governing the transfer and use of the funds, including the scale of contribution, were defined in a document agreed

¹ For more information on evaluation in FAO, see www.fao.org/evaluation/en

² PC 94/7 f, May 2007.

³ Starting from the 2010/11 biennium the term "extra-budgetary" has been replaced by "funded by voluntary contributions". This document will also refer to these as 'projects' for brevity.

⁴ CL 145/6, Report of the 112th Session of the Programme Committee.

⁵ MTF/GLO/170/FZP

with the Emergency and Rehabilitation Division (TCE) in 2006.⁶ TCE, in its capacity as Budget Holder (BH) of all emergency and rehabilitation initiatives until recently, transferred to the Trust Fund (TF) the due share from each project when they had achieved 40% of budget disbursement.

5. The TF financed more than USD 9 million worth of evaluations, which focused on major emergency operations or country evaluations with predominantly E&R activities. This document uses the term Emergency and Rehabilitation Programme to indicate FAO's collective response to natural and/or humanitarian crisis in the context of consolidated appeals.⁷ In some countries, such programmes may be part of the FAO Country Programming Framework, with a focus on preparedness and disaster risk reduction.

6. The trust fund 'Evaluation of Trust Funds Development projects funded by voluntary contributions'⁸ was created in 2011. Field Programme Circular 2011/1 defines the rules for the systematic inclusion of evaluation provisions in initiatives funded by voluntary contributions, including the scale of contributions.⁹ Since 2012, significant progress has been made in including the contribution clause in new initiatives, and some projects have already transferred the due amount to the TF.¹⁰ However, by mid-2013, available funds were just enough to start planning their use. Main obstacles to leveraging resources as foreseen by the FPC are:

- the financial regulations of some FAO members and resource partners, that prevent contributions from the initiatives they finance to activities not directly related to the project itself;
- specific policies and regulations on evaluation of some resource partners, particularly International Financial Institutions (IFIs), whose own evaluation units should be involved in the evaluation of the initiatives they finance; and
- the reticence of some members and resource partners to contribute to what is perceived as another indirect cost of the Organization.

7. Since 2012, major transformational changes have taken place in FAO. FAO Director General proposed, among other measures, to "*reduce fragmentation and increase integration across all aspects of FAO's work, irrespective of source of funding*".¹¹ In his view, "*Integrated programme management is required to ensure results and accountability in a coherent manner for all FAO's programmes and projects at the country level. This includes the integration of development, emergency and rehabilitation activities..*".¹² The proposal was welcomed and accepted by the Governing Bodies in June 2012.

8. By mid-2013, TCE had delegated the Budget Holder responsibility for national and regional emergency and rehabilitation (E&R) initiatives to country and regional offices. It retained the following responsibilities:

⁶ Evaluation Service Note on the Approach and Funding Arrangements for the Evaluation of FAO's Work in Emergency Response and Rehabilitation, 2006. A second document, OED Approach for Selecting/ Planning Emergency Programme Evaluations, 2011, was discussed but not officially finalized.

⁷ This definition may require adjustment when the High-Level Work Plan for SO5 will be finalized and become operational.

⁸ MTF/GLO/350/FZP

⁹ The scales of contributions from E&R and Development projects differed slightly.

¹⁰ See PC 112/8, November 2012.

¹¹ CL 144/15.

¹² Ibid.

- Funding Liaison Officer role for all E&R initiatives;
- Coordination and management of interventions for Level 3 emergencies;
- Development of normative instruments and tools for work in E&R, etc.

9. Informal discussions at the senior level in FAO, in particular with the Evaluation Committee (Internal), led to the agreement that *the integration of development, emergency and rehabilitation activities* should have a bearing on the funding and planning of evaluations of initiatives funded by voluntary contributions as well.

10. Building on FPC 2011/1, new procedures are hereby proposed for the allocation of financial provisions for evaluation of all FAO initiatives funded by voluntary contributions. The draft version of the document was discussed with all concerned FAO units.¹³ This final version, that is to be integrated into FAO Project Cycle Guide, supersedes all preceding related documents, including FPC 2011/1 and represents the formal reference for any related issue. OED should be consulted for any issue on this matter.

2 Separate evaluation of initiatives funded by voluntary contributions

11. In consideration of FAO's policy to integrate development, emergency and rehabilitation activities, the June 2007 decision of the Council to include mandatory provisions for separate evaluation will apply to **all** initiatives funded by voluntary contributions with a budget over USD 4 million. The sole exception will be projects that are part and parcel of Emergency and Rehabilitation Programmes with a budget above USD 4 million (see below).

12. Separate project evaluations will also be carried out to respond to specific requirements of resource partners and stakeholders, independently from the budget size of the initiative. These are tentatively identified as follows:

- Projects funded by the Global Environment Fund (GEF): currently, GEF evaluation policy foresees that projects with budget above USD 1 million require a final evaluation; projects with budget above USD 2 million require a mid-term and a final evaluation;
- Initiatives funded by resource partners with policies incompatible with FAO evaluation policy: the financial regulations of some resource partners do not allow contribution to pooled-funds for evaluations, and require that evaluation cost be directly related to the project, to be considered as an eligible cost; examples are Germany and the European Commission;
- Any other initiative funded by voluntary contributions with budget below USD 4 million, for which concerned parties, namely the recipient government/s, the resource partner and FAO, consider that a separate evaluation will be cost-effective.

13. Principle 1 below synthesises the rules for separate evaluation of initiatives funded by voluntary contributions. Typically, evaluation provisions in these initiatives will correspond to **1-2%** of the total budget,¹⁴ within the range of internationally accepted evaluation costs. Should resources required for a separate evaluation correspond to more than

¹³ These included: DDO, LEGA, Regional Offices, OSD, OSP, TCSR, TCE.

¹⁴ The evaluation of big projects will cost proportionately less than evaluation of small projects.

2% of the project budget, the alternative approach proposed in Section 3 below should be sought.

Principle 1: Separate evaluation of initiatives funded by voluntary contributions

The following initiatives will include adequate provisions for a separate evaluation in their lifetime, tentatively at 1-2% of their total budget:

- A All initiatives funded by voluntary contributions, with a budget over USD 4 million, with the exception of initiatives that are part and parcel of Emergency and Rehabilitation Programmes;
- B GEF-funded projects;
- C Initiatives funded by voluntary contributions by resource partners with regulations incompatible with the 2007 Council resolution;
- D Any other initiative with budget below USD 4 million, for which parties consider a separate evaluation to be cost-effective.

14. Roles and responsibilities for ensuring compliance with Principle 1 are described in Principle 2 below. Currently, main actors are:

- Budget Holders;
- the Office for Support to Decentralization (OSD);
- the Donor Liaison and Resource Mobilization Team (TCSR);
- TCE;
- the Field Programme Units in each Regional Office, and
- OED.

Principle 2: Roles and responsibilities for the separate evaluation of initiatives funded by voluntary contributions

- a) All staff with responsibility for project approval and operational clearance will ensure that all new initiatives funded through voluntary contributions with budget above USD 4 million include appropriate text and allocate adequate provisions for at least one separate evaluation in their lifetime, through a separate budget line called 'Evaluation';
- b) All staff with responsibility for project approval and operational clearance are invited to consult with OED upon approval of new initiatives, to ensure that adequate evaluation provisions and text are included, based upon total budget, duration, geographical scope and complexity; consultation may also concern projects with budgets below USD 4 million, should a separate evaluation be necessary due to resource partner's rules and regulations, or considered cost-effective and useful in terms of learning opportunity;
- c) OED will provide timely feedback whenever consulted, on modality, timing and budget requirements for the evaluation of new initiatives.

15. A standard text on separate evaluation of initiatives funded through voluntary contributions is included in Box 2 below, which will require adjustments to different circumstances. Ideally, projects with duration above 5 years should include provisions for both mid-term and final evaluation.

Box 2. Standard text on separate evaluation of initiatives funded through voluntary contributions

An independent Mid-Term Evaluation will be undertaken when delivery will reach 50% of the initial total budget and/or mid-point of scheduled project duration, to review efficiency and effectiveness of implementation in terms of achieving project objective, outcomes and delivering outputs. The MTE will be instrumental for contributing through operational and strategic recommendations to improved implementation for the remaining period of the project's life. FAO Office of Evaluation, in consultation with project stakeholders, will be responsible for organizing and backstopping the Mid-Term Evaluation, including: finalizing the ToR, selecting and backstopping the team and Quality Assurance of the final report. The evaluation will, *inter alia*:

- assess relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of project design;
- assess relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the implementation arrangements;
- assess progress and gaps in achieving established outputs and outcomes;
- propose any correction and/or adjustment to the implementation strategy as necessary.

OR:

An independent Final Evaluation is recommended to be completed within six months prior to the actual completion date (NTE date) of the project. It will aim at identifying project outcomes, their sustainability and actual or potential impacts. It will also have the purpose of indicating future actions needed to assure continuity of the process developed through the project. FAO Office of Evaluation, in consultation with project stakeholders, will be responsible for organizing and backstopping the Final Evaluation, including: finalizing the ToR, selecting and backstopping the team and Quality Assurance of the final report. The evaluation will, *inter alia*:

- assess relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of project design and implementation;
- assess project actual outputs and potential outcomes, impacts and sustainability;
- assess project performance in gender mainstreaming and achievements on gender equality;
- identify lessons learned about project design, implementation and management;
- highlight achievements and practices worth up-scaling and/or replication.

3 The Evaluation Trust Fund

16. In compliance with the corporate policy of integration of emergency, rehabilitation and development activities, the two Trust Funds that pool contributions from both E&R and Development projects and for which OED has Budget Holder responsibility, will be merged into one single 'Evaluation Trust Fund'.

17. The Evaluation Trust Fund will be managed by OED, in the role of Budget Holder and Lead Technical Unit.¹⁵ The Director, OED, will be responsible for the final decision on the use of the accrued resources, including timing and approach, after consultation with concerned parties.¹⁶ Regular reporting on the use of the TF will take place through the biennial Programme Evaluation Report.¹⁷

¹⁵ This was the case also for the two trust funds established in 2006 and 2011 respectively.

¹⁶ These will include: Budget Holders, Lead Technical Units and Lead Technical Officers, Funding Liaison Officers, of the projects to be evaluated through each cluster evaluation.

¹⁷ As a temporary measure, one year after the endorsement of this document, OED will prepare and share with stakeholders a report on achievements and gaps in the implementation of the mechanism proposed. As required, remedial actions will be discussed and agreed among all parties, to be implemented thereafter.

18. Principle 3 below re-affirms the 2007 decision by the Council, namely that all initiatives funded by voluntary contributions must be evaluated or contribute to evaluation in FAO. Box 3 shows the new scale of contributions to the Evaluation TF. It is worth reminding that this scale **does not apply** to separate project evaluations, dealt with in Section 2 above.

Principle 3: Contributions to the Evaluation Trust Fund

All initiatives funded through voluntary contributions with a budget below USD 4 million and that will not have provisions for a separate evaluation, will include in their budget a contribution to the Evaluation Trust Fund managed by OED, as per the scale of contribution contained in Box 3 below.

Box 3. Scale of contributions to the Evaluation Trust Fund¹⁸

Project Budget (USD)	Contribution to the Evaluation Trust Fund (USD)
<i>Below 200,000</i>	0
<i>200,001 – 300,000</i>	2,000
<i>300,001 – 400,000</i>	2,800
<i>400,001 – 500,000</i>	3,600
<i>500,001 – 600,000</i>	4,400
<i>600,001 – 700,000</i>	5,200
<i>700,001 – 800,000</i>	6,000
<i>800,001 – 900,000</i>	6,800
<i>900,001 – 1,000,000</i>	7,600
<i>1,000,000 – 1,500,000</i>	10,000
<i>1,500,001 – 2,000,000</i>	14,000
<i>2,000,001 – 2,500,000</i>	18,000
<i>2,500,001 – 3,000,000</i>	22,000
<i>3,000,001 – 3,500,000</i>	26,000
<i>3,500,001 – 4,000,000</i>	30,000

19. Roles and responsibilities for ensuring compliance with the above will be as per Principle 4 below.

Principle 4: Roles and responsibilities for the transfer of established contributions to the Evaluation Trust Fund

- a) All staff with responsibility for project approval and operational clearance, will ensure that all initiatives funded through voluntary contributions with budget between USD 200,000 and USD 4 million, include the established contribution to the Evaluation Trust Fund, as per the scale in Box 2 above, through a separate budget line called 'Evaluation';
- b) Budget Holders for all projects in any location, will be responsible for the transfer of the established amount to the Evaluation Trust Fund, upon operational closure of the initiative;
- c) All staff with responsibility for project financial closure, will ensure that the due amount has been transferred to the Evaluation Trust Fund;
- d) OED will monitor that initiatives funded through voluntary contributions include allocations for evaluation in their Project documents and budgets, and that expected contributions are transferred to the Evaluation Trust Fund in due time.

¹⁸ The scale of contributions corresponds to 0.8% of the average of each budget range, e.g. USD 2,000 is 0.8% of USD 250,000, average between 200,001 and 300,000.

20. The primary use of the resources in the Evaluation Trust Fund will be for evaluations of clusters of projects that share one or more of the following characteristics:

- i. theme and/or approach (e.g. pesticide control, fisheries management, farmer field school, emergency and rehabilitation programme, etc.);
- ii. geographical area of intervention, e.g. state or region within a country; country; sub-region or region;
- iii. resource partner.

21. Accordingly, a standard text on contribution by initiatives funded through voluntary contributions to the Evaluation Trust Fund is included in Box 4 below.

Box 4. Standard text on contributions to the Evaluation Trust Fund for initiatives funded through voluntary contributions

In compliance with FAO policy on evaluation and in consideration of its budget size, no separate evaluation of the project is anticipated. However, the project will contribute to the OED-managed Evaluation Trust Fund and will potentially be evaluated through a cluster approach, along with other projects that share one or more of the following characteristics: theme and/or approach, geographical area of intervention, resource partner. If during project implementation the parties deem a separate evaluation necessary, this will be organised under OED's responsibility and fully funded through the project budget.

22. Trust Fund resources will be used to evaluate only initiatives that have contributed to the Trust Fund itself. Trust Fund resources could also be used to complement resources for separate evaluation of initiatives funded through voluntary contributions, to carry out an evaluation of a cluster of projects along the lines describe above.

23. Evaluations of clusters of projects can also take place when the initiatives within the cluster are at different stages of implementation: this will allow identifying lessons learned that can immediately be integrated into the 'younger' initiatives.

24. When significant resources will accrue to the Trust Fund from projects in the same country, these will be used to carry out their in-depth evaluation, or a sample thereof, as a complementary analysis in the context of country evaluations funded through OED Net Appropriation resources.

25. When significant resources will accrue to the Trust Fund from projects within the same area of focus of a thematic or strategy evaluation, these will be used to carry out their in-depth evaluation, or a sample thereof, as a complementary analysis in the context of major evaluations funded through OED Net Appropriation resources.

26. Trust Fund resources will also be used to carry out impact evaluations, final or ex-post, of voluntary-funded initiatives of particular relevance to the work of the Organization, e.g. pilot initiatives or approaches and themes that receive a high share of resources. These evaluations will focus on the assessment of the lasting changes, intended and non-intended, brought about by the initiatives at the relevant - institutional, community or household - level.

27. Evaluations of clusters of projects will be carried out according to the standard OED procedures for evaluation of initiatives funded through voluntary contributions. This will include the preparation of Management Responses and Follow-up reports by responsible

units. Guidelines on the process, roles and responsibilities, template terms of reference and report outline, are all available in OED Web Site.

28. The translation of evaluation reports financed through the Trust Fund will be charged to the respective projects, whenever required. The translation and reproduction of evaluation documents for the governing bodies, funded through the Trust Fund, will also be charged to the Trust Fund.

29. Principle 5 defines the management and reporting rules for the Evaluation Trust Fund.

Principle 5: Responsibility for and reporting on the Evaluation Trust Fund

- a) OED will be the Budget Holder, Lead Technical Unit and manager of the Evaluation Trust Fund;
- b) Resources in the TF will be allocated to different purposes, along the lines described above, under the responsibility of the Director, OED;
- c) The Office will report on the use of the Trust Fund through its biennial Programme Evaluation Report, submitted to the FAO Conference.

4 Measures for evaluation provisions of other initiatives funded by voluntary contributions

30. This section clarifies how evaluation provisions will be planned for initiatives funded by voluntary contributions that do not fully meet the cases described in sections above.

Emergency and Rehabilitation Programmes

31. All initiatives funded by voluntary contributions as part of an Emergency and Rehabilitation Programmes (E&R) will contribute to the Evaluation Trust Fund, as per the Principles set out above. The nature of these programmes requires some specific arrangements for evaluation, as well as a different model of communication between TCE and OED. These aspects are defined in Principle 6 here below.

Principle 6: Measures for the evaluation of Emergency and Rehabilitation Programmes

- a) E&R initiatives with a budget above USD 4 million, **which are part of an E&R Programme**, will contribute to the Evaluation TF with 0.8% of their total budget;
- b) The threshold for the evaluation of a specific E&R programme in response to a crisis of Level 1, 2 and 3 is set at USD 10 million of annual resources contributed through FAO;¹⁹ the evaluation will be funded through the resources accrued to the Evaluation Trust Fund from each and all initiatives supporting the specific Programme;
- c) OED will participate in the mechanisms for evaluation agreed in the context of the IASC Transformative Agenda,²⁰ whenever the overall humanitarian response includes a significant level of food security interventions through FAO;
- d) On a quarterly basis, TCE will inform and update the Director, OED of all on-going E&R programmes, their total financial resources and delivery.

Multi-donor Trust Funds

32. Multi-donor Trust Funds (MUL-TF) typically receive financial contributions in different tranches and from different resource partners. FAO recently established that all MUL-TF will be managed under a pool funding arrangement, specified in the agreement to be signed by all contributing partners. The total budget programmed will represent the cash received from the donors and not the estimated total budget to be received.²¹ MUL-TF projects will always have a minimum of two resource partners; the work-plan and completion date will be established based on resources available; any additional contribution will entail a Budget Revision and revised work-plans. In this framework, MUL-TF will be subject to the same rules for evaluation as any other initiative funded through voluntary contributions and subject to extensions. Principle 7 provides guidance for all MUL-TF.

Principle 7: Measures for evaluation provisions in Multi-donor Trust Funds

- a) All MUL-TF will be treated as any other initiative funded through voluntary contributions;
- b) All MUL-TF with an initial budget above USD 4 million will include sufficient provisions for a separate evaluation.
- c) All MUL-TF with an initial budget below USD 4 million will include provisions according to the Evaluation Trust Fund scale, to be transferred to the Evaluation TF at the time of project operational closure;
- d) All MUL-TF that during their life will exceed the budget threshold of USD 4 million, will include an evaluation budget line through a Budget Revision, to ensure sufficient provisions for a separate evaluation;
- e) In consideration of the typical complexity of these initiatives, consultation with OED on appropriate evaluation provisions for MUL-TF is strongly recommended.

¹⁹ A level 3 emergency requires a corporate response and typically would involve FAO delivery of a minimum of USD 10 million over a short period of time. See DG Bulletin 2013/32 http://intranet.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/FAO_Communications/dgb/dgb13_32.pdf

²⁰ <http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/pageloader.aspx?page=content-template-default&bd=87>

²¹ This differs from the previous practice where the total budget was an indicative figure (funding target) that may or may not be reached.

Extension of initiatives funded by voluntary contributions

33. Projects initially approved with budgets below USD 4 million may exceed this threshold level through project extensions. In these cases, the activity becomes subject to mandatory separate evaluation. Principle 8 provides guidance for these cases.²²

Principle 8: Extension above the threshold of USD 4 million of initiatives funded by voluntary contributions

a) All staff with responsibility for project management and operational clearance will ensure that projects overcoming the threshold of USD 4 million through extension and additional resources will include in their budgets sufficient funds for a separate evaluation.

Other voluntary contributions

34. FAO is recipient of voluntary contributions in support of activities different from development, emergency and rehabilitation projects and programmes. These include:

- support to conferences, meetings, publications, etc. unrelated to other activities funded by voluntary contributions;
- support to statutory bodies of FAO;
- support to activities unrelated to development, emergency and rehabilitation, e.g. buildings, etc.

35. Principle 9 provides guidance for these cases.

Principle 9: Evaluation provisions for other voluntary contributions

a) Budget Holders, OSD, TCSR, TCE, the Field Programme Units in each Regional Office and any other staff in the position of project operational clearance will consult with the Director, OED, to agree on evaluation provisions on a case-by-case basis;

b) In the case of contributions to Article VI and Article XIV bodies, no evaluation by FAO is foreseen, unless specifically requested by members. In the latter cases, parties concerned will agree on the required budget and its source.

36. FAO is also active in several United Nations Joint Programmes (UNJPs), usually administered by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with a multi-donor trust fund office that manages projects and the evaluations themselves. A process is on-going among UN agencies, to define acceptable procedures to all for the evaluation of these programmes. This document will be amended accordingly with a specific Addendum, when agreement will be reached.

²² By postponing the transfer of the established amount to the OED Trust Fund at the moment of operational closure (see Principle 5b), there should be no cases requiring a restitution of funds by OED for the separate evaluation.