THE EVALUATION FUNCTION OF THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION (FAO)

FINAL REPORT
4th July 2012

PEER REVIEW:

The Evaluation Function of the Food and Agriculture Organization

Final Report

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The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the organizations commissioning this study.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CPF	Country Programme Framework
E&R	Emergency and Rehabilitation
ECG	Evaluation Cooperation Group (for multilateral development banks)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FAOR	FAO Representative
FPMIS	Field Programme Management Information System
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IEE	Independent External Evaluation of FAO
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IPA	Immediate Plan of Action for FAO's renewal
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OED	FAO's Office of Evaluation
OIOS	UN Office of Internal Oversight Services
PC	Programme Committee
PEMS	Performance Evaluation and Management System
POW	Programme of Work
RBM	Results-based Management
ToR	Terms of Reference
TF	Trust Fund
UN	United Nations
UNDAF	UN Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	UN Evaluation Group
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
USD	US dollars
WFP	World Food Programme

All dollar amounts are U.S. dollars unless otherwise indicated.

FOREWORD

The evaluation function in the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has seen some interesting and challenging developments over time. When the Independent External Evaluation of the FAO in 2008 proposed to make the department more independent and to increase its budget, a reorganization and reorientation took place in the following years, culminating in a new charter for the office that was adopted in 2010. The Charter projects a more strategic role for evaluation in FAO and describes how evaluation can be made useful, credible, independent, impartial, and transparent. It also puts in place a periodic check on whether the evaluation function is developing according to the Charter, through peer reviews and independent evaluations. This peer review is the first to take place in line with the provision in the Charter.

In mid-2011, FAO's Office of Evaluation and the UNEG/DAC Joint Task Force on Peer Reviews identified a panel that could undertake this peer review according to the UNEG framework for professional peer reviews of the evaluation function of UN organizations. As chairman of the Panel, I had the honor to help identify distinguished colleagues as panel members and as a consultant. The draft terms of reference for the Panel, prepared on the basis of the UNEG peer review framework, were presented to FAO's Evaluation Office, the Evaluation Committee of FAO, and the Programme Committee of FAO's Council for comments. A normative framework for the assessment was prepared, which formed the basis for a self-assessment of FAO's Office of Evaluation.

The peer review process itself started in January 2012 with the Panel visiting FAO for one week. The first series of interviews formed an excellent basis for the further work of the Panel and its consultant, which culminated in a second and final visit to FAO at the end of April 2012. At the end of May, a first draft of the peer review report was presented to FAO's Office of Evaluation, the Evaluation Committee, and the Programme Committee for due process: checking of factual errors and errors of analysis. Final comments were received at the end of June, after which the report was finalized on July 4. The report will receive a "management response" (which will be jointly written by FAO management and the Office of Evaluation, the latter to cover recommendations directed at that office) and will then be presented at a Programme Committee meeting, which is planned for November 2012.

For the findings, conclusions, and recommendations, I refer to the Executive Summary that follows. The Panel was impressed by the commitment and enthusiasm of many in FAO and its governing bodies for a strong role of evaluation. It hopes that this peer review helps FAO to further strengthen the usefulness, credibility, independence, impartiality, and transparency of its evaluations. Although the organization has made a great leap forward when the new charter was adopted, further fine-tuning is necessary, for which the Panel has made specific recommendations.

The Panel would like to thank FAO's Office of Evaluation, its Director Robert Moore, and Senior Evaluation Officers Rachel Bedouin and Tullia Aiazzi, for the highly

professional and cordial interaction that allowed the Panel to gain significant insight in its operations and products. All staff members of the office helped and supported the peer review and have shared their insights and time with us. Marta Bruno, Knowledge Management officer, was instrumental in moderating the peer exchange between the Panel and the office. The Chair of the Evaluation Committee, Ann Tutwiler, Deputy Director-General of FAO, as well as the Committee members, have provided excellent support and have given us their time and opinions. A heartfelt thanks also goes to the members of the Programme Committee and to its chair, Cecilia Nordin van Gansberghe, for their time and availability. We hope that the report will enable them to further discuss improvements of the evaluation function in FAO.

As chair of the Panel, I would also like to acknowledge the time and efforts of the panel members, Doha Abdelhamid, Segbedzi Norgbey, and Henri Jorritsma, as well as the excellent support we received from our consultant, Paul Balogun, who provided invaluable support to the Panel. Last, but not least, support was provided in the GEF Evaluation Office by Carlo Carugi, Senior Evaluation Officer, Elizabeth B. George, Senior Program Assistant and by Juan Portillo, Kseniya Temnenko, and Evelyn Chihuguyu of the Operations and Knowledge Management Team.

Rob D. van den Berg
Chair, Professional Peer Review Panel

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FAO in line with its new Charter for the FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) requested this peer review, which requires a biennial review of "conformity of evaluation work to best practice and standards."[1] Between January and June 2012, a panel of professional evaluators carried out the peer review, which was conducted in line with the UN Evaluation Group's Framework for Professional Reviews of the Evaluation Function of UN Organizations. In line with the Framework, three core criteria that need to be satisfied for evaluation functions and products to be considered of high quality—independence, credibility and utility—were examined.

The Peer Review Panel included the following: Rob D. van den Berg, Director of Evaluation of the Global Environment Facility in Washington, DC, United States (Chair of the Panel); Doha Abdelhamid, independent senior consultant and professor of finance and policy evaluation, Cairo, Egypt; Henri Jorritsma, vice-chair of the DAC Evaluation Network and Deputy Director of the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Hague, the Netherlands; and Segbedzi Norgbey, Chief of Evaluation of the UN Environment Programme, Nairobi, Kenya. Paul Balogun, an advisor, expert in evaluation and familiar with multilateral organizations, assisted the Panel.

FAO's collaboration and full support throughout the review process is greatly appreciated. The Office of Evaluation has engaged with the Panel in an open and constructive dialogue, sharing information, thoughts, and ideas, as have the members of the Programme Committee and FAO management who made time to engage with the Panel.

Within the approach adopted for the Peer Review, the most significant limitation was the lack of consultation with key external stakeholders, particularly, government and nongovernmental organization (NGO) cooperating partners based in partner countries and a wider range of FAO staff directly affected by the evaluations. To be credible, such processes are by their nature resource intensive and would have required significant additional resources, including visits to several countries. The review focused on the systems and approaches for identifying, implementing, and using evaluations to the Governing Bodies; and the country evaluations and project evaluations were not examined in great detail. The Peer Review's main limitations and issues that might be more thoroughly covered in the future evaluation of evaluation within FAO are covered in detail under Sections 2.4 and 8.2, respectively of this report.

Overarching Conclusions

In comparison with many other agencies in the UN system, FAO has a mature evaluation function with considerable experience, reflecting its establishment in 1968. The recommendations on evaluation included in FAO's Immediate Plan of Action (IPA), approved by the 35th Session of the FAO Conference in November 2008, have triggered significant change. The Panel concludes that significant progress has been made over the past two years in implementing the evaluation-related

IPA recommendations. This is most clearly shown in FAO's new Evaluation Policy—called the Charter for the FAO Office of Evaluation—which was approved by FAO's Governing Council in April 2010. However, remedial action is required on the Charter to ensure the continued usefulness, credibility, and independence of the evaluation function in FAO.

Utility

The Panel found that the systems and approaches commonly identified under the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms for enhancing and facilitating the use of strategic evaluations are in place. The Charter adequately covered issues related to the use of evaluation. However, opportunities exist for significantly enhancing the usefulness of evaluation to the organization.

The 2007 Independent External Evaluation of FAO's review of the FAO evaluation function found that Programme Committee members and senior managers agreed that the Governing Bodies did not use the findings of evaluations in making decisions on the overall strategic direction of the organization, including priority setting and resource allocation—and that, in principle, they thought that they should. Our overall conclusion is that making more strategic use of evaluation in the future is where the greatest opportunity lies for enhancing the usefulness of evaluations to the Governing Bodies.

Moving towards more strategic evaluation and strategic use of evaluations requires both change in what the Programme Committee and the Director-General and Evaluation Committee see as the purpose of strategic evaluations and how they are used. On the part of OED, it requires a number of changes in the approach to evaluation currently used, with consideration of what strategic questions are and whether or not meeting strategic information demands would be best met through more use of synthesis of lessons and experience across evaluations. Finally, it implies a shift in the evaluation recommendations from telling operational management in detail what it should do, and how, to identifying issues that need to be solved through strategic decisions. Lessons on the operational and technical level are often better raised in consultative workshops during the evaluations and in specific knowledge products emerging from evaluations.

The overall utility of country evaluations can be improved. FAO's recent rapid introduction of country programming approaches, as signified by the rollout of the country program frameworks, suggests that there is now an opportunity to look at how to enhance their utility. The time is also right to carry out a meta-evaluation of the country program evaluations completed to date, to learn what works and what does not, and in which contexts.

As in many other organizations the link between results-based management (RBM) and evaluation is challenging. This is one of the few areas in which something clearly stated in the Charter—namely an advisory role for OED to management on RBM—has not been acted upon. We agree with the rationale given for why this role was included in the IPA and then the Charter. We also think that the fact that management is actively considering how the RBM approach/systems should change in future makes this an opportune moment for OED and senior management to work together on this issue.

Credibility

Credibility in the individual evaluations has been primarily reliant on evaluation practice as interpreted by the individual evaluation managers and the credibility of the contracted team leaders. Our conclusion is that the systems and approaches used to recruit professional staff into OED accord with good practice elsewhere. Evaluations are conducted transparently, assessed as impartial, and conducted independently without interference from management. Stakeholder consultation takes place at various parts of the process, but does not always engage all stakeholders.

OED's approach does diverge from comparable evaluation functions in two key aspects related to ensuring credibility. First, final responsibility for the contents of the OED evaluations lies with the evaluation team—and in practice with the contracted team leader—rather than with the evaluation office. Evaluation offices in the UN with similar level of independence all take final responsibility for the evaluation to ensure greater utility, comparability of findings, and consistency in approaches, in line with best international practice. Second, to date, a common and consistent understanding and application across the team of evaluation managers of evaluation practice and standards is not ensured.

Over the past 18 months, OED has started to introduce guidance to strengthen common practice by the evaluation managers. The systems identified under the relevant UNEG Norms are now being put in place. Our view is that demands upon evaluation will continue to evolve over the next few years and that the changes in demands will necessitate acceleration in the changes to how credibility and quality are ensured in OED evaluations. A more strategic use of evaluations in management and the Programme Committee requires greater ownership of these evaluations by OED. External evaluation teams tend to focus on technical and sector issues. They are rarely able to address higher-level institutional issues, such as priority setting between sectors or further strategic guidance to the organization. Lastly, evaluation findings tend to gain strategic weight, if they are gathered through a series of evaluations, rather than through individual evaluations only. This calls for greater guidance and involvement of OED in the evaluations to ensure comparability over time and through evaluations.

To conclude, OED should align with practice elsewhere and assume explicit responsibility for the contents and quality/credibility of its evaluation reports. This will necessitate some redefinition of the roles of the Director, evaluation managers, and team leaders. It will also require strengthening quality assurance approaches and including information in the evaluations to (i) show that a credible evaluation methodology has been selected, and (ii) that it has been applied. Lastly, evaluations need to provide information on the limitations in the methodology and data for addressing the evaluation questions posed. This, in turn, emphasizes the need for OED to complete the moves to systematize practice and understanding in the office.

Independence

The differing contexts of the evaluation functions that belong to UNEG means that the norms related to independence are by necessity broad. To a significant extent, the Panel has to benchmark OED's independence and the systems put in place against those found in the most independent UN evaluation functions, such as UNDP and IFAD, and experience from the independent evaluation functions

of the GEF and the multilateral banks. Our overall conclusion is that along with UNDP's Evaluation Office and IFAD's Office of Evaluation, OED is the most functionally independent evaluation office across the UN family. However, a more strategic role of the evaluation function with its required shift towards greater ownership of evaluations also requires changes in the Charter to ensure OED's functional independence.

While significant progress has been made in establishing OED's functional independence, experience suggests that there are still areas where it would be wise to further formally clarify issues. The Panel observes that while OED is structurally independent of operational and technical line management functions, the existence of a reporting line to the Director-General and being subject to the normal FAO administrative rules and procedures (which implies accountability to the Director-General) means that the office is not structurally independent. Notwithstanding that there may be solid reasons and legal grounds for not granting full structural independence (and with the exception of IFAD no other UN evaluation function has greater structural independence), this undoubtedly increases the challenges of maintaining the functional independence for the evaluation function. We, therefore, have offered a number of suggestions under the recommendations on how the Charter might be revised to address these issues, along with suggestions on how to maintain OED's independence within the agreed rules and procedures of FAO.

Impartiality is closely related to independence and we find no evidence that the evaluations are not, in the main, impartial. We conclude that the evaluations are impartial mainly because of OED's efforts to ensure that it recruits team leaders who are independent and have not been involved with the work under evaluation. However, we would note that scope still remains to ensure that evidence of impartiality is more clearly presented in the evaluation reports. This can be done by ensuring that the linkage between evidence and findings and the conclusions is more clearly made and, where appropriate, ensuring that alternative views on the conclusions to be drawn from the evidence presented are included in the evaluation reports.

Recommendations

Utility

Recommendation 1: To the Programme Committee, Director-General, and OED
FAO should move to more strategic use of evaluations to the Governing Bodies, requiring evaluations to address strategic issues, focusing recommendations on strategic decisions, and broadening the evaluative base through a more consistent evaluation practice.

Recommendation 2: To the Director-General and OED
OED and management should agree how country evaluations can best be used within FAO's evolving country programming approach and clarify roles and responsibilities for the management responses and follow-up reports.

Recommendation 3: To the Director-General and OED
The advisory role of the OED to management in the RBM system should be established as soon as possible.

Credibility

Recommendation 4: To OED
OED should become explicitly responsible for the contents of all evaluations that it delivers.

Recommendation 5: To OED
Evaluation reports should adopt a uniform approach on presenting the methods used, the data collected and analyzed and on the scope and limitations of the evaluation—in order to provide transparency on how the evaluation gathered findings and reached conclusions.

Recommendation 6: To OED
OED should rapidly move to systematize common and consistent evaluation practice and understanding across the team of evaluation managers.

Independence

Recommendation 7: To the Programme Committee
The Charter should be amended to clarify a number of issues required to ensure functional independence of the OED.

Recommendation 8: To the Programme Committee
The Charter should be amended to allow an evaluation of evaluation in FAO in late 2015 or early 2016 to allow time for changes suggested here to bear results and also to fit with development of the next strategic plan in 2017. Alternate peer reviews and evaluations should then be scheduled every three years.

Recommendation 9: To the Director-General and OED
The Director-General and OED should draft an agreement between management and OED identifying how administrative rules on procurement, human resources, budget management, and travel will be applied to ensure both the accountability and independence of OED.

Proposed changes in the Charter

With reference to **Recommendation 7**, responsibility for maintenance of OED's functional independence should be included in the roles and responsibilities of the FAO Director-General. This can be done by inserting "independently" after "functions" in paragraph 37 sub 5 of the Charter.

The role of the Programme Committee in the recruitment, reappointment, and possible dismissal of the OED Director should be clarified. Possibilities include the following:

- The Charter recognizes the right of the Programme Committee/Council to recommend its preferred candidate for appointment to the position of Director;

- The Charter states that the Director's re-appointment for a second term can only be refused by the Director-General if the Programme Committee/Council requests this; and

- The Charter states that the Director's appointment can only be terminated before its end date, if the Programme Committee/Council requests this or there are fiduciary reasons for termination.

The Panel suggests that the possibility of the Director's performance assessment either being done by the Programme Committee/Council or that the Programme Committee/Council have a substantive input in the assessment be included in any future amendment of the Charter.

With reference to **Recommendation 8**, the Charter should be amended on the schedule for biennial review by independent peers and an independent evaluation of the evaluation function every six years: paragraphs 30 and 31 should reflect that peer reviews take place every six years as well and that peer reviews and independent evaluations alternate.

With reference to **Recommendation 4**, Paragraph 24 of the Charter should be amended to reflect that the evaluation report would be owned by the Office of Evaluation, without diluting the responsibility of the evaluation team to undertake a credible and independent evaluation.

Note

1. Charter for the FAO Office of Evaluation, VI. paragraph 30.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1   Two key factors led to the introduction of professional peer reviews of evaluation functions in multilateral agencies in 2004: one, a strong demand for multidonor evaluations of multilateral organizations; two, the recognition of the need to harmonize evaluation practice because of the considerable variation across the UN System. In view of this, the Evaluation Network of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC)/Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), jointly with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), introduced the peer review mechanism. Over the years, this developed into the UNEG framework for professional peer reviews, with a strong linkage to the UNEG Norms and Standards. The purpose of peer reviews is to assess the extent to which the evaluation function meets the UNEG Norms and Standards and to recommend how the function could be strengthened and made more credible and its evaluations more useful. Over the years, peer reviews have assessed the evaluation functions of UNDP, UNICEF, WFP, OIOS, UNIDO, IFAD, the GEF, UN-Habitat, and UNEP.

2   The 2006 Independent External Evaluation (IEE) of the FAO led to a process of reform called the Immediate Plan of Action for FAO's renewal (IPA). This included a number of actions to strengthen the role and independence of the Office of Evaluation (OED). The original timetable for implementing these actions was delayed while a new Director was appointed. Implementation really started in January 2010, when the evaluation function was separated from the Division of Programming, Budget and Evaluation (under which it had previously been administratively located) to become the Office of Evaluation, with the position of the head of the Office upgraded to Director level. Annex IV summarizes progress to date in implementing the actions identified in the IPA. In May 2010, the Council approved a new evaluation policy, called the Charter for the FAO Office of Evaluation, which provides the policy framework for the evaluation function in FAO. This policy was incorporated into the Basic Texts of the Organization. This Charter describes the new organizational structure in which the Office operates. It also confirms that the Office will adhere to the norms and standards established by the UNEG. The primary principles underpinning evaluation in FAO are independence, impartiality, credibility, transparency, and usefulness.

3   FAO in line with its new Charter for the FAO Office of Evaluation requested this peer review, which requires a biennial review of "conformity of evaluation work to best practice and standards."[1] Between January and June 2012, a panel of professional evaluators carried out the peer review.[2] Terms of reference for the review are provided in Annex I. A list of people interviewed as part of the process is in Annex II.

1.2 Purpose and Scope of the Review

4   The review was conducted in line with the UNEG Framework for Professional Peer Reviews of Evaluation Function of UN Organizations,[3] which the Annual General Meeting of the UN Evaluation Group approved in 2011. This framework, based on

experience from previous peer reviews, mainly focuses on review of three core issues, namely the independence, credibility, and usefulness of the evaluation function.

5   The review took place within an ongoing process of improvement of FAO's Office of Evaluation. It is, therefore, intended to contribute to this process through an independent assessment of the independence, credibility, and utility of FAO's Office of Evaluation and the quality and use of its work.

6   The reviewers examined and, where thought relevant, commented upon:

- The evaluation policy of the FAO as embodied in the Charter of the FAO Office of Evaluation and other policies and procedures having a bearing on the Office of Evaluation and its work—in particular the extent to which the evaluation policy conforms with international standards, and whether other policies are relevant to the functioning of the Office of Evaluation (for example, those concerning results-based management, harmonization and alignment, strategic planning, budgeting, or evaluation coverage).

- The nature of relations of the Office of Evaluation with the various organizational units in FAO, as well as FAO's representations in member countries.

- Organizational relationships of the Office of Evaluation with Management and the Governing Body of the FAO.

- The quality of the evaluations undertaken under the auspices of the Office of Evaluation. This includes the planning process, the conduct of the evaluations, the quality of the evaluation reports, the independence of evaluation teams and team leaders, and the ways in which the Office enables them to produce credible reports and stakeholders are able to effectively comment on draft reports.

- Adequacy of the quality assurance system, including periodicity of reviews of the evaluation function.

- The quality and use of evaluation results and follow-up. Important aspects are the following: the actual impact of the evaluations; the ways in which evaluation results are disseminated and lessons used both within the FAO and by others (such as member countries, donors, or cooperating partners); the responsibility for the follow-up of recommendations; and how follow-up is undertaken and monitored. How well does the management implement decisions based on evaluation recommendations?

- Structural aspects of how the evaluation function operates in the FAO, including whether the current functional arrangements are effective in ensuring that the Office of Evaluation can contribute to the learning and accountability within the FAO.

- Other actions undertaken by FAO's Office of Evaluation such as networking, conferences, or website.

- Adequacy of resources for evaluation, including observations about of the two Trust Funds (Emergency TF and Development TF) linked to voluntary-funded resources of the organization.

- The internal organization of the FAO Office of Evaluation.

7   The review is also intended to provide recommendations to the Director-General, the Governing Bodies, and the Office of Evaluation aimed at improving the quality of FAO's evaluation regime and to inform further discussions and decisions about the functional and administrative independence of the Office of Evaluation. For the Office of Evaluation, several of the findings and conclusions and their implications were discussed as part of a half-day peer exchange between the Panel members and all of the department's staff. The findings of the review were also presented to the UNEG members, as well as the DAC Evaluation Network. This was to ensure feedback on the quality of evaluation in one of the multilateral organizations and contribute to the further development of this instrument.

Notes

1. Charter for the FAO Office of Evaluation, VI. paragraph 30.

2. Ibidem, paragraph 31.

3. http://www.uneval.org/papersandpubs/documentdetail.jsp?doc_id=945.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Core Assessment Criteria

8   In line with the Framework for Professional Peer Reviews of Evaluation Functions in Multilateral Organizations, which the UNEG developed, the review mainly focused on examining three core issues that strongly affect whether or not an evaluation function and its products are likely to be of high quality:

- **Independence of evaluations and the evaluation system(s).** The evaluation process should be impartial and independent of the organization's processes and systems concerned with policy making, delivery, and the management of assistance. A requisite degree of independence of the evaluation function is a recognized precondition for the credibility, validity, and usefulness of evaluation products. In assessing independence, the reviewers kept in mind that the appropriate guarantees of the necessary independence of the OED are defined by the nature of its work, its governance, and decision-making arrangements, and other factors. Moreover, such as with most UN organizations, the Office's aim is to encourage the active application and use of evaluations at all levels of management, meaning that systemic measures for ensuring the necessary objectivity and impartiality of this work should receive due attention.

- **Credibility of evaluations.** The credibility of evaluation depends on the expertise, independence of the evaluators, and the degree of transparency of the evaluation process. Credibility requires that evaluations should report successes as well as failures. Recipient countries also should, as a rule, fully participate in evaluation in order to promote credibility and commitment. Whether and how the organization's approach to evaluation fosters partnership and helps builds ownership, therefore, merits attention as a major theme.

- **Utility of evaluations.** To have an impact on decision-making, evaluation findings must be perceived as relevant and useful and be presented in a clear and concise way. They should fully reflect the different interests and needs of the many parties involved in development cooperation. Furthermore, each review should bear in mind that ensuring the utility of evaluations is only partly under the control of evaluators. It is also critically a function of the interest of managers, and member countries through their participation on governing bodies, in commissioning, receiving, and using evaluations.

9   In addition to examining the above three core issues, the **impartiality** and **transparency** of evaluation processes were also examined, as they are strongly related to the three core issues and are emphasized in the Charter for FAO's evaluation function. Impartiality is enabled by independence and is a fundamental element of the evaluations' credibility. Transparency, another fundamental element of credibility, is an important basis for the evaluations' utility. As a first step in the review process, the core issues were elaborated in the Normative Framework, which is available in Annex III of this report.

2.2 Peer Review Approach

10 A professional peer review is not a full-fledged evaluation intended to comprehensively and systematically evaluate practices, processes, and outcomes. As such, it is not as comprehensive as the evaluation of FAO's evaluation function carried out as part of the 2006 Independent External Evaluation of the FAO. It is important to note that the Charter calls for an independent evaluation of the evaluation function every six years.

11 The review was designed to be a relatively lighter process, in line with the approach adopted in other recent peer review processes. As such, the reviewers took care to be open when there was insufficient evidence upon which to come to a firm conclusion or make a strong recommendation. Notwithstanding its more limited scope, the methodology applied in this review was consistent with that used in previous peer reviews. However, the review approach did differ from previous peer reviews in two key areas. First, the peer panel members assumed greater responsibility for both the collection and analysis of information. This contrasts with previous reviews, where the advisor or advisors to the Panel have done most of this work. Second, based on the preliminary analysis, a structured peer exchange with the professional staff of the OED enriched to some extent development of both the conclusions and recommendations. This situation both enhanced the level of understanding of the reviewers and, as importantly, provided a genuine learning opportunity for the OED staff.

12 The review undertook the following major steps and activities.

a. **Preparation of the approach for the review.** The peer panel members and the OED collaboratively conducted the preparatory activities. The terms of reference and normative framework were developed and agreed between September and November 2011. Subsequent to agreement of the normative framework, the OED produced its self-assessment against the questions in the framework in late November–early December 2011.

b. **Review of background documentation.** The peer review team and advisor reviewed key documents covering general information on FAO, its organizational structure, and the institutional setting of the OED and evaluation-specific documents. This work also allowed the reviewers to gain insight into the processes governing the programming, conduct, reporting, and feedback of evaluations commissioned by OED. The peer reviewers used this work in combination with the self-assessment to identify key issues that needed to be examined in more depth during the rest of the process.

c. **First set of interviews with stakeholders in Rome.** From January 16–18, 2012, the Panel and advisor visited FAO headquarters in Rome and conducted semistructured interviews with the OED professional staff and FAO program management. The basic purpose of the interviews was to collect information on the structural aspects of the functioning of the OED and in relation to the three main quality assessment criteria. The semistructured nature of the interviews allowed new questions to be introduced during the interviews in response to the interviewee's answers. During the mission, a meeting was also organized with representatives of the Governing Council's Programme Committee.

d. **Further data collection and analysis.** Based on the initial analysis completed in the first visit to Rome, the peer reviewers, with support from the advisor, carried out the following:

- Analysis of the evaluation process and final products for five evaluations to the Governing Bodies completed by the OED between 2009 and 2011[1] and discussed with the Programme Committee and all country evaluations completed to date where there was also a management response.

- Analysis of the methodology used for country evaluations and benchmarking of the approach against that used by other comparable organizations.

- Continued review of FAO and other documentation to gather evidence to fill gaps identified in the normative framework.

- A three-day visit by the Advisor to the OED to interview OED professional staff on how OED is organized and staffed and whether there are systems/ practices in place to ensure that evaluation managers have the needed support and training.

e. **The peer exchange.** The peer reviewers and OED staff held a peer exchange during the Panel's second Rome visit, from April 19–24. During this visit, interviews were also conducted with a number of other FAO stakeholders.

f. **Drafting and validation of the report.** An initial draft of this report was shared with OED and checked for factual accuracy.

2.3 The Review Panel

13 A number of important considerations were taken into account when deciding the panel membership: (i) relevant professional experience; (ii) independence—to avoid any potential or alleged conflict of interest or partiality, the panel members should not have any close working relationship to FAO that might influence the panel's position and deliberations; and (iii) independent multilateral and bilateral members, as well as experiences from the South and transition countries.

14 The combination of these criteria together with the voluntary nature of serving on the panel resulted in the following composition:

- Doha Abdelhamid, independent senior consultant and professor of finance and policy evaluation, Cairo, Egypt

- Henri Jorritsma, vice-chair of the DAC Evaluation Network and Deputy Director of the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Hague, the Netherlands

- Segbedzi Norgbey, Chief of Evaluation of the UN Environment Programme, Nairobi, Kenya

- Rob D. van den Berg, Director of Evaluation of the Global Environment Facility in Washington, DC, United States (Chair of the Panel)

15 An advisor, Paul Balogun, who is an expert in evaluation and familiar with multilateral organizations, assisted the Panel. Paul Balogun had been an advisor on two previous peer reviews—UNDP and IFAD. He was responsible for preparatory work

(data collection and information gathering) and a preliminary assessment of the collected information. He also participated in the interviews of stakeholders and in the drafting of the Peer Review report.

2.4 Limitations

16   The Peer Review is not a formal evaluation. It is a less comprehensive and in-depth assessment, but it adheres to a rigorous methodology applying the key principles of evaluation while taking full advantage of the particular benefits of a peer mechanism. Issues that were not covered in this peer review but which might be covered in the anticipated evaluation of evaluation at FAO are noted in the conclusions and recommendations section.

17   Within the approach adopted for the Peer Review, the most significant limitation was the lack of consultation with key external stakeholders, in particular government and NGO cooperating partners based in partner countries and a wider range of FAO staff directly affected by the evaluations. This reflected the decision to adopt a "light" peer review process and the fact that systematic consultation with the wider group of stakeholders would have required systematic identification of all of the key stakeholders across a number of evaluations and then interviewing all of them. Such processes, to be credible, are by their nature resource intensive and would have required significant additional resources, including possibly visits to several countries.

18   As a strategic peer review, a decision was also taken not to examine project-level evaluation processes within FAO, even though these processes comprise a significant and ongoing component of the OED work program. This decision was taken because senior management and the Programme Committee are not the main audience for these evaluations and, therefore, engaging with either the relevant donors or in-country stakeholders that are the actual audience for these evaluations would have required significant extra resources.

19   Although the Peer Review did not cover all aspects, the Panel is confident that the report can serve as a credible input and stimulus for FAO as it moves forward to improve and embed the evaluation function as a critical component in its ongoing search for excellence in fulfilling its mandate.

Note

1. The five evaluations were (i) Strategic Evaluation of FAO Country Programming, including the NMTPF mechanism (2010), (ii) Evaluation of FAO's Role and Work Related to Water (2011), (iii) Evaluation of FAO's Role and Work in Nutrition (2010), (iv) Evaluation of FAO's Regional and Sub-regional Offices for the Near East (2011), and (v) Second Real-Time Evaluation of FAO's Work on Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) (2010).

3 THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION: AN OVERVIEW

3.1 Mandate and Vision

20 FAO was established in 1945 as a specialized United Nations agency with the vision of an organization that would ensure a world where never again would there be widespread hunger, malnutrition, or famine.

21 Over the ensuing decades, FAO's work has expanded to include concerns about international codes and standards, intellectual property, poverty and rural development, and a range of issues related to the environment, including conservation, climate change, and the sustainability of a variety of natural resources. Moreover, the virtual explosion of international agencies concerned in one way or the other with agriculture that has taken place means that FAO now operates in a very crowded field. Agricultural research as an international public good now resides unquestionably with the *Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)*. The number, size, and impact of NGOs working in agriculture, food security, and environment have expanded exponentially. The private sector has become a driver of changes in the global food and agricultural system.

22 As pointed out in the 2007 *Independent External Evaluation of FAO,* these changes confront FAO with a range of new challenges, while many of the old challenges still remain unresolved. FAO now must address the global issues of food and agriculture, while at the same time helping to build local capacity. FAO is expected to exercise regional and global leadership through unifying international development efforts, while at the same time taking into full account the myriad of differing, if not conflicting, interests, viewpoints, and priorities of its constituents. It is expected to seek out and function effectively in partnership with governments, decentralized authorities, the private sector, bilateral and other multilateral agencies, and NGOs, and to do so at grassroots, national, and international levels. FAO is instructed to decentralize and increase operational strength on the ground, while demonstrating increased savings in administrative costs and operating with a steadily decreasing core budget as percentage of overall budget.

23 In adopting the Immediate Plan of Action (IPA) for FAO's renewal, the (Special) Session of the FAO Conference in November 2008 approved the following vision for FAO:

FAO's vision is of a world free of hunger and malnutrition where food and agriculture contributes to improving the living standards of all, especially the poorest, in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable manner.

24 The Conference also approved in principle a set of strategic objectives, functional objectives, and core functions of FAO, expressing the impact expected to be achieved in the ten-year time horizon 2010–19 by members with a contribution from FAO. Our understanding is that the Director-General has now proposed that

a new set of five strategic objectives be used, but the Governing Bodies have not yet approved this proposal.

Strategic Objectives

A. Sustainable intensification of crop production

B. Increased sustainable livestock production

C. Sustainable management and use of fisheries and aquaculture resources

D. Improved quality and safety of food at all stages of the food chain

E. Sustainable management of forests and trees

F. Sustainable management of land, water, and genetic resources and improved responses to global environmental challenges affecting food and agriculture

G. Enabling environment for markets to improve livelihoods and rural development

H. Improved food security and better nutrition

I. Improved preparedness for, and effective response to, food and agricultural threats and emergencies

J. Gender equity in access to resources, goods, services, and decision-making in the rural areas

K. Increased and more effective public and private investment in agriculture and rural development

Functional Objectives

X. Effective collaboration with Member States and stakeholders

Y. Efficient and effective administration

Core Functions

a) Providing long-term perspectives and leadership in monitoring and assessing trends in food security and agriculture, fisheries, and forestry

b) Stimulating the generation, dissemination, and application of information and knowledge, including statistics

c) Negotiating international instruments, setting norms, standards, and voluntary guidelines, supporting the development of national legal instruments and promoting their implementation

d) Articulating policy and strategy options and advice

e) Providing technical support to
   - promote technology transfer
   - catalyze change
   - build capacity, particularly for rural institutions

f) Undertaking advocacy and communication, to mobilize political will and promote global recognition of required actions in areas of FAO's mandate

g) Bringing integrated interdisciplinary and innovative approaches to bear on the organization's technical work and support services

h) Working through strong partnerships and alliances where joint action is needed

3.2 Governance

25 The governance architecture is set out in the Basic Texts of the Organization and consists of the Conference, the Council with an independent chairperson, and the specialist committees reporting to the Council. The Conference and the Council are the Governing Bodies empowered to take decisions. The specialist committees, while an integral part of governance, have only an advisory role.

26 The Conference is FAO's highest political body. It consists of 191 member nations, two associate members, and one member organization, the European Union. Each has a single equal vote. Decisions are made by either consensus, simple majority voting, or by a two-thirds majority vote for changes in the Constitution. The Conference meets biennially and delegates many of its substantive functions to the Council. Decisions reserved for the Council include the following: (i) admission of new members; (ii) approval of conventions and agreements; (iii) budget approval; (iv) election of the Director-General; and (v) appointment of the Independent Chairperson of the Council.

27 The Council consists of 49 representatives of member countries drawn from the seven FAO regional groupings. Members of the Council serve three-year rotating terms. Meeting three times per biennium in substantive sessions, its role is to carry out executive oversight of FAO's program and budgetary activities. Decisions are taken by consensus or simple majority voting.

28 Beneath the Council are a number of specialist committees, of which the most relevant for the Peer Review are the Programme and the Finance Committees. Each of these committees has 12 members, and they are the committees most closely involved in oversight of FAO's management, program, budget, and financial issues. The Programme Committee (PC) has responsibilities for reviewing the FAO Programme of Work and Budget, the content and balance of the program activities, and for making recommendations regarding priorities. The Finance Committee (FC) reviews *inter alia* the financial implications of management's budgetary proposals and approves budgetary transfers proposed by management. It also examines on behalf of the Council FAO's audited accounts. The two committees hold concurrent sessions and meet for about one day at each session in what is known as the Joint Meeting (JM). Here, they consider the proposed budget level and other issues common to both.

29 The 2010 Charter for the FAO Office of Evaluation states that the Council is the decision-making body on evaluation policy and work programming. It exercises oversight over evaluation and ensures that there is transparent, professional, and independent evaluation of FAO's performance in contributing to its planned outcomes and impacts, including feedback of evaluation into planning and programming. In practice, much of this role has been delegated to the Programme Committee, which is the direct recipient of evaluation reports for the governing bodies. Reports involving financial or administrative matters may be referred to the Finance Committee.

30 According to the Charter, the role of the Programme Committee with respect to evaluation is to advise the Council on overall evaluation policies and procedures and to do the following:

a. Approve the rolling work plan for major evaluations

b. Consider major evaluation reports and the management response to the evaluation and its findings and recommendations. The Committee presents its conclusions on both the evaluation and the management response to the Council in its report, as well as its recommendations for follow-up action.

c. Receive progress reports on the implementation of evaluation findings and recommendations and provide recommendations to the Council.

3.3 Organizational Structure

31 The current Director-General, José Graziano da Silva, assumed his functions on January 1, 2012, for a term that expires on July 31, 2015. A number of corporate level functions, including the Office of Evaluation and the Office of Strategy, Planning and Resource Management report to the Director-General.

32 Below this level, the organization is split among seven main departments. One, the Corporate Services, Human Resources and Finance Department, deals with administration. The other six focus on technical and substantive issues—Agriculture and Consumer Protection, Economic and Social Development, Fisheries and Aquaculture, Forestry, Natural Resources Management and Environment, and Technical Cooperation.

33 Implementation of a comprehensive program of organizational reform and culture change, the Immediate Plan of Action for FAO's renewal (IPA), began in 2008. Headquarters restructuring and delegation of decision making has been introduced to create a flatter and hopefully more responsive structure and reduce costs. Modernizing and streamlining of administrative and operational processes are also underway. Improved internal teamwork and closer external partnerships—coupled with upgrading of IT infrastructure and greater autonomy of FAO's decentralized offices—is intended to allow FAO to respond quickly where needs are greatest. As FAO is primarily a knowledge-based organization, investing in human resources is a top priority. Capacity building has been introduced, including a leadership program, employee rotation, and a new junior professional program. The creation of the independent Office of Evaluation is also part of this ongoing reform process.

34 Besides its headquarters in Rome, FAO is present in over 130 countries. The decentralized network includes five regional offices, 11 subregional offices, two multidisciplinary teams, 74 fully fledged country offices (excluding those hosted in regional and subregional offices), eight offices with technical officers/FAO Representatives, and 36 countries covered through multiple accreditation. In addition, the organization maintains five liaison offices and four information offices in developed countries. As of April 1, 2011, FAO employed 1,835 professional staff (including Associate Professional Officers and National Professional Officers) and 1,856 support staff. Figures only refer to staff holding fixed term and continuing appointments. Approximately 53 percent of the staff is based at headquarters in Rome, while the remainder work in offices worldwide.

3.4 Organizational Resources

35 FAO expenditure, by source, over the past three biennia, is shown in table 1.

Table 1 FAO Expenditure, by Source, over the Past Three Biennia

Source of funding	Biennium		
	2006–07	2008–09	2010–11
Assessed contribution (%)			
Regular program budget	52	48	40
Voluntary contribution (%)			
Trust funds (excluding emergency projects)	26	26	33
Special relief operations (emergency projects)	22	26	27
Total expenditure ($ million)	1,774.6	2,189.1	2,736.6

36 As indicated above, the regular program budget, made up of the member countries' contributions and set at the biennial FAO Conference, represents a declining share of total expenditure over the past three biennia. This decline does not represent a decline in the absolute level of the regular program budget, which has actually increased in modest terms in each of the last three biennia. Instead, the decline in the share of overall expenditure for regular program funding reflects the rapid growth in extrabudgetary resources channelled through the various trust funds. As such, FAO's overall budgetary experience closely reflects that observed across the wider family of UN agencies and the ongoing concerns over the implications of extrabudgetary funding's growing importance. This decreases the predictability and dependability of funding, making strategic planning more difficult. As important, as extrabudgetary funding does not fall under the direct purview of the Governing Bodies, it decreases the ability of both the Governing Bodies and senior management to ensure that FAO's work is better focused and strategic, which is a key need identified in both the 2007 *Independent External Evaluation of FAO and multiple resolutions of the General Assembly*.

3.5 Organizational Results

37 The current strategic results hierarchy consists of high-level goals of the members, a set of strategic objectives, and organizational results. Indicators have not been set at either the goal or strategic objective levels. At a corporate level, the focus is on measuring FAO's achievement against the 49 organizational results—providing evidence of how the goods and services that FAO produces have been taken up and used by its clients. Indicators have been developed at the organizational-results level, although questions remain over their robustness. For each of these results areas, the programs are supposed to develop supporting work plans showing how they will contribute to the organizational results. In turn, the performance of individual employees is supposed to be linked to results identified in the work plans; as is evaluation of employee performance. Work is currently underway to significantly revise the strategic results framework.

38 Evaluation is a centralized function in FAO. For monitoring, Field Programme Monitoring staff is found in the regional and subregional offices (SROs), but the Office of Evaluation neither manages nor supports these staff members.

4 THE EVALUATION FUNCTION OF FAO

39   In comparison with many other agencies in the UN system, FAO has a mature evaluation function with considerable experience. Other specialized agencies (such as UNESCO, WHO, and ILO) set up formal institutionwide evaluation offices only very recently (2003 in most cases and 2005 in that of ILO), whereas FAO has had an Evaluation Office since 1968.

40   For the Peer Review, there is no need to understand or describe this long history in detail. More relevant is an understanding of the changes that have occurred in OED's role and function over the past five years and the implications of FAO's new Evaluation Policy (called the Charter for the FAO Office of Evaluation), which FAO's Governing Council approved in April 2010. This change has been just one component of the overall change process launched in FAO with the Immediate Plan of Action approved by the 35th Session of the FAO Conference in November 2008.

4.1 Role and Function

41   The Charter identifies the role and function of the Office of Evaluation as follows:

> Paragraph 33. The Office of Evaluation is responsible for ensuring the relevance, effectiveness, quality and independence of evaluation in FAO. It is located inside the FAO Secretariat structure, reporting to the Director-General and to the Council through the Programme Committee.
>
> Paragraph 34. The Office receives guidance from the Council and its Programme Committee and consults with the Evaluation Committee (Internal). It is solely responsible for the conduct of all evaluations (with the exception of auto-evaluations), including the selection of evaluators and the terms of reference. It is thus operationally independent within the Organization. In addition to its responsibilities for the conduct of evaluations, the Office also:
>
> 1) facilitates feedback from evaluation through follow-up to individual evaluations and in communicating lessons for more general application;
>
> 2) ensures timely reporting on the implementation of those evaluation recommendations accepted by the governing bodies, management and other concerned stakeholders;
>
> 3) has an institutionalised advisory role on results-based management and programming and budgeting;
>
> 4) contributes to the enhancement of evaluation within the UN through active participation in the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG);
>
> 5) contributes to the evaluation of the effectiveness of the UN system and other partners as it relates to areas of FAO's mandate through joint evaluations;
>
> 6) coordinates its work programme with the rest of the UN system, taking into account the work of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU); and
>
> 7) for staff training, provides comments on training requirements to the Human Resources Management Division.

42   The Charter does not call for a significant change in the roles and responsibilities of the OED, except in one small area. OED's previous advisory role in auto-evaluations carried out by FAO program management has been removed.

4.2 Position in the Organization

43   Since 2010, within the FAO organizational structure, OED is a discrete satellite office of the Office of the Director-General. The OED Director has two formalized reporting lines. First, the Director reports to the Council via the Programme Committee. Second, the OED Director reports directly to the Director-General, although what the Director should report upon to the FAO Director-General is not specified in either the Charter or the terms of reference for the position.

44   To strengthen independence of the OED, and in response to commitments made in the IPA (see Annex IV), the Charter introduced a number of conditions for employment of the Director of Evaluation, intended to strengthen his or her independence. These conditions reflect good practice, but appear to draw more on guidance issued by the *Evaluation Cooperation Group* (ECG) of the multilateral banks than those of UNEG. This simply reflects the reality that the ECG has greater codified experience on how to assure the structural and functional independence of evaluation functions that have the degree of independence found for the OED. The Director of Evaluation now serves for a fixed term of four years with a possibility of reappointment only once for a further term of four years. The renewal of the appointment of the Director of Evaluation is subject to consultation with the Programme Committee. Likewise, the Director-General must consult with the Programme Committee before the termination of the appointment of the Director of Evaluation. The Director of Evaluation may not be reappointed within FAO to another post or recruited as a consultant during a period of one year following the expiry or termination of the appointment. Finally, the position of Director of Evaluation has been reclassified as a D2 position, so that the Director is at the same level as the Directors of comparable evaluation units in other UN agencies.

4.3 Budget and Staff

The Budget

45   The OED budget and sources of funding have been evolving over the past five years. Overall, the budget is currently mostly derived from three sources, although two more will come on-line in the current 2012–13 biennium:

a. **The regular program budget.** The Charter states that at least 0.8 percent of the total Regular Programme Budget should be allocated to the Office of Evaluation. This represents the lower end of the range suggested in the IPA. In line with the IPA, and to strengthen the independence of the office, this budget is allocated in full to the Evaluation Office upon approval by the Council and Conference as part of FAO's overall Programme of Work and Budget. This therefore means that FAO senior management has no opportunity to influence either the level or access to this budget allocation. The current intention is that the 0.8 percent of the total Regular Programme Budget will be reached in the 2014–15 biennium. For the 2010–11 biennium, the Council and Conference fixed the percentage at 0.6 percent, while in the 2012–13 biennium the percentage has been fixed at 0.7 percent, although FAO management had argued for a lower level (an argument rejected by the Programme Committee).

b. **Technical Cooperation Programme.** FAO's Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) began in the late 1970s and is funded from FAO's Regular Budget. It is for projects requested by member countries that correspond to certain criteria, including a maximum duration of two years and maximum budget is $500,000. Evaluation of TCP projects, which began in 1997, became a part of broader thematic evaluations from 2000. For the last several years, approximately 0.5 percent of the TCP appropriation has been allocated to the OED to fund their evaluation.

c. **Emergency Evaluation Trust Fund.** In line with the 2007 Council decision, the Office of Evaluation defined in 2006 a program approach for evaluating emergency and rehabilitation work of the organization mirroring the programmatic and multipartner approach of FAO tackling emergencies and established a corresponding funding mechanism in 2007. In order to resource this systematic and comprehensive approach to the evaluation of FAO's work in emergencies, an evaluation line became standard for inclusion in the budgets of emergency response and rehabilitation projects. These are all projects labelled emergency or rehabilitation and funded by voluntary contributions. The amount to be budgeted for evaluation was based on a sliding scale, agreed between OED and management, ranging from $1,200 for projects with an overall budget between $75,000 and $150,000 to $120,000 for projects with an overall budget above $10 million. These evaluation funds are transferred to the Emergency Evaluation Trust Fund, which OED manages. When the total amount channelled through FAO for an emergency intervention (be it a "response" or a "program") is at least $10 million, an evaluation must be carried out. Otherwise, only on exception will project evaluations be carried out, that is, large projects with stand-alone activities and for which there is a special request by a resource partners at the time of the agreement signature. These funds can also be used for country and programmatic evaluations to the Governing Bodies,[1] where the majority of activities evaluated have been through emergency response and rehabilitation projects.[2]

d. **Trust Fund for the Evaluation of Technical Cooperation for Development.** In line with the 2007 Council decision,[3] the Technical Cooperation Department issued a Field Programme Circular (FP 2011/01) in March 2011 that an evaluation line be included in the budgets of all Technical Cooperation for Development projects. These are all projects funded using voluntary contributions. The amount to be budgeted was based on a sliding scale ranging from $2,500 for projects between $200,000 and $300,000 to $35,000 for projects between $2 million and $4 million. These evaluation funds are transferred to the Trust Fund for the Evaluation of Technical Cooperation for Development, which OED manages, to carry out evaluations of clusters of projects. These funds can also be used for country evaluations, programmatic evaluations, and evaluations to the Governing Bodies, where the majority of activities evaluated have been through Technical Cooperation for Development projects. In addition, an evaluation will be carried out for each project/program of Technical Cooperation for Development for which the total amount channelled through FAO is at least $4 million.

e. **FAO Multi-Donor Partnership Trust Fund.** The Evaluation of the FAO Multi-Partner Programme Support Mechanism was set up in September 2011 and is currently planned to be completed by July 2013. It hosts the funds for

the evaluation of this large umbrella Trust Fund that was set up to facilitate the provision of voluntary contributions from signatory donors (Netherlands and Sweden) in support of the four-year Medium Term Plan, Plan of Work and Budget, and the Core Functions of the Organization. The Evaluation will assess the mechanism per se, as well as the results of the work funded through it. This is not part of the core funding of OED, but include it as a separate budget line because of its size and as an illustration of the fact that OED potentially receives significant funding from particular donors to fund specific evaluations.

46 Trends in the budget over the past three biennia are shown in table 2. Overall, the OED budget increased by 9 percent between the 2008–09 and 2010–11 biennia. It is expected to increase by a projected 26 percent between the 2010–11 and current 2012–13 biennia. However, while the OED budget has increased rapidly, the even more rapid rise in overall extrabudgetary budget of the organization means that the budget for evaluation has actually declined as a percentage of FAO's overall budget. Whether this will have implications for future evaluation coverage of FAO's work remains unclear, although the Programme Committee has on several occasions expressed concern over whether coverage of activities supported using extrabudgetary resources is adequate.

47 Looking at the sources driving the increase in the overall budget, the allocation from the regular program budget has increased by around 15 percent in each of the last two biennia. In contrast, the absolute amount of Technical Cooperation Programme evaluation funds has remained effectively constant at around $0.5 million. The budget allocation from the Emergency Evaluation Trust Fund first declined between the 2008–09 and 2010–11 biennia from $2.56 million to $2.37 million, before being projected to rise rapidly in the current biennium to $3.06 million. However, a significant proportion of the projected 26 percent rise in the OED budget in this biennium reflects the inclusion of new sources of income. While OED can to some extent predict what funds will be available through the trust funds by reviewing the budgets of projects, the risk remains that not all of the projected funding under this new trust fund will actually be available.

48 An important issue with OED's budget is that only the percentage of FAO's overall regular program budget that should be transferred to OED is decided by the Governing Bodies. While the Programme Committee in 2007 endorsed the principle

Table 2 OED Budget by Biennium and Source

| | Biennium | | |
Source of funding	2008–09	2010–11	2012–13
	percentage of budget		
Regular program budget	64	69	62
Technical Cooperation Programme evaluation funds	6	6	4
Emergency Evaluation Trust Fund	30	25	27
Trust Fund for the Evaluation of Technical Cooperation for Development	0	0	4
FAO Multi-Donor Partnership Trust Fund	0	0	3
Overall ($ million)	8.58	9.33	11.8
Evaluation expenditure as % of total FAO expenditure	0.39	0.34	—

Note: Data for 2012–13 are projected. — = not available.

that an evaluation line be included in the budgets of all Technical Cooperation for Development projects, the level of funding to be included appears to have been agreed upon directly by OED and program management, and not by the Governing Bodies. It is also important to bear in mind that the effectiveness of the present approach for both the trust funds relies upon program staff consistently applying the principle of including a funded evaluation budget line within all voluntary funded projects. While experience to date suggests that program staff has not done so consistently, this is outside of the direct control of OED and the Programme Committee.

Staffing

49   Rules and regulations for recruitment of both staff and consultants by OED were most recently clarified in the 2010 Charter, paragraphs 41–43:

> 41. All appointments for evaluation, including that of the Director of the Office of Evaluation, staff and consultants follow transparent and professional procedures with the primary criteria being those of technical competence and behavioural independence but also with considerations of regional and gender balance. The Director of Evaluation will have the responsibility for the appointment of evaluation staff and the appointment of consultants, in conformity with FAO procedures.

> 42. A competitive procedure applies for appointment of the Director of Evaluation. A Panel, consisting of representatives of the Director-General and the Programme Committee, as well as evaluation specialists from other UN agencies will review the terms of reference and statement of qualifications for the post. Based on the review, a vacancy announcement will be prepared, issued widely and a list of qualified candidates for interview compiled. The Panel will then review these candidates and make a final recommendation regarding candidates appropriate for appointment by the Director-General.

> 43. The Director of Evaluation serves for a fixed term of four years with a possibility of reappointment only once for a further term of four years. The renewal of the appointment of the Director of Evaluation is subject to consultation with the Programme Committee. Likewise, the Director-General shall consult with the Programme Committee before the termination of the appointment of the Director of Evaluation. The Director of Evaluation may not be reappointed within FAO to another post or recruited as a consultant during a period of one year following the expiry or termination of the appointment.

50   As mentioned before, current rules and regulations for recruitment of the Director reflect the recommendations of the 2007 IEE evaluation, which were then incorporated into the IPA. To some extent, these rules and regulations draw more on the norms and standards used by the multilateral banks, rather than those developed by the UN Evaluation Group—reflecting the greater experience within the multilateral banks on these issues. This means that the panel needed to take care in assessing independence, as the Charter does not state that evaluation in FAO should be aligned with the norms and standards used by the multilateral banks.

51   For other professional staff, the Charter codified previous practice. Vacancy announcements for professional evaluation posts have been required for a number of years (depending on the level of the post), with experience in evaluation and/or "relevant experience in the analysis of agricultural and rural development issues at the international level" being included as the major technical criterion.

Professionally, candidates are required to have a university degree in economics, agriculture, or social sciences, but an advanced degree is seen as an advantage. Assessment of a candidate's practical evaluation experience and knowledge of evaluation methodology is core to the interview and testing processes, which take place for each post, regardless of level. Besides interviews, candidates are given a written test, which is scored blind by an evaluation staff member who is not part of the interview panel.

52 FAO introduced a new Performance Evaluation and Management System (PEMS) in 2009, which is now used for assessment of individual staff performance. As part of this assessment, areas in which staff needs more training are identified.

53 The office is presently staffed by the Director, six professionals on regular posts, one professional in a short-term post, three professionals (of which one started in January 2012) funded by the Emergency and Rehabilitation Evaluation Trust Fund, and three general service staff. As shown in table 3, the number of staff has not changed significantly over the past few years; nor is it expected to increase significantly in the future. However, OED has made increasing use of evaluation analysts who are employed on short-term contracts of up to 11 months duration and who work on specific evaluations.

54 Within the context of an increasing overall budget but relatively stable staff numbers, staffing is, therefore, becoming a declining proportion of the overall OED budget, as shown in table 4. The Charter also calls for gender and regional balance across the team. In terms of gender representation, OED's gender balance is better than that for the organization as a whole, especially at senior professional level; this requirement has been met. At present, the Director is male, while there are four female evaluation managers/professional grade staff and five male staff in this grade band. All evaluation analysts, who are contracted under short-term contracts to support specific evaluations, are currently female, as are all of the general administration staff. However, ensuring a regional balance across the team has not been achieved, with all of the more senior evaluators (P4 and P5 levels) coming from only two regions.

55 OED operates a model of evaluation, in which professional staff generally acts as the evaluation managers, while team leaders are contracted for most evaluations. The exception is the case for some project evaluations, where OED staff may act as team leaders. While this approach has been in practice for at least 10 years, it was only recently clarified in draft guidance issued by OED, which states that:

Table 3 OED Staffing

Type of staff	Funded from	Number of staff at start of biennium		
		2008–09	2010–11	2012–13
Professional staff	Regular program budget	8	6	8
	Emergency Evaluation Trust Fund	2	2	3
General service staff	Regular programme budget	3	3	3
	Emergency Evaluation Trust Fund	0	0	0
Overall		13	11	14

Table 4 Staff and Nonstaff Costs as Proportion of OED Budget

Use of funding	Biennium		
	2008–09	2010–11	2012–13
Staff costs (% of total OED costs)	45	46	39
Nonstaff costs (% of total OED costs)[a]	55	54	61
Overall ($ million)	8.58	9.33	12.6

a. Note that research analysts contracted by OED and who are managed by the Evaluation Managers are funded under this budget line.

The *team leader* is the champion of the evaluation and is responsible for its contents. His/her tasks include the following, specified in the individual terms of reference (ToR) in the case of corporate evaluations:

i. analysis and elaboration of the substantive contents related to the subject matter of the evaluation;

ii. leadership of the evaluation team, including advice and suggestions to team members on the evaluation content;

iii. preparation of the evaluation report, including the consolidation and harmonization of the team members' contributions; and

iv. presentation of the evaluation's findings and recommendations to stakeholders.

The *evaluation manager* is responsible for running the evaluation process. His/her tasks include the following, specified in the individual ToR in the case of corporate evaluations:

i. management of the evaluation process according to the ToR and the time-schedule, from the evaluability assessment or scoping phase of the evaluation to the quality assurance of the management response;

ii. definition and application of the evaluation methodology;

iii. analysis of issues in the evaluation related to FAO's mandate, structure, procedures and working mechanisms, also based on past evaluations' findings;

iv. support and guidance to team members on evaluation methodology and on information about FAO;

v. full participation in the evaluation work; and

vi. preparation of agreed outputs on methodology and FAO's mandate, structure, procedures and working mechanisms, usually including a written report.

4.4 The Evaluations Produced

Types of evaluations

56   Under FAO policy, all FAO work financed from the organization's regular budget (mandatory assessed contributions), as well as that financed from voluntarily contributed extrabudgetary resources, is subject to evaluation.

57   The OED either produces or is responsible for quality assurance for three types of evaluations:

- **Evaluations for the Governing Bodies:** Strategic evaluations are where the primary audience is intended to be the Governing Bodies, via the Programme Committee. These are selected by or decided upon by the Council on the advice of the Programme Committee. Such evaluations focus on key elements of the results-based hierarchy, including strategic and functional objectives, impact focus areas, organizational results, and core functions. Major evaluations include all aspects of the work in the area covered, regardless of funding source, and deal with work at headquarters, regional, and country levels. The program of evaluations is defined in a rolling three-year plan.

- **Country evaluations:** Since 2005, FAO has been carrying out evaluations for its entire work in individual countries. Country evaluations aim to improve the relevance and performance of FAO's interventions, providing accountability and deriving lessons for better formulation and implementation of country-level policies, strategies, and activities in the future. Country evaluations look at FAO's work from the standpoint of its utility to the country. They provide FAO's stakeholders with a systematic and objective assessment of the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impacts, and sustainability of the programs and interventions undertaken by FAO in the country. In countries where there is a large portfolio of emergency and rehabilitation activities, evaluations consider the extent to which FAO's work links relief efforts to development, and FAO's operational capacity for timely delivery is a key element of the evaluation's scope. Country evaluations should serve as important inputs into the formulation and review of the Country Programming Framework and FAO contributions to the UN Development Assistance Framework. As such, they will consider FAO cooperation at country level with respect to how FAO interventions best promote the organization's comparative advantages and are related to its global strategic objectives and core functions. The primary audience for country evaluations are the national government and FAO staff, whether posted in the country, or dealing with the country from subregional, regional, or headquarters offices. Other target audiences are donors in the country, the UN country team, and national civil society organizations.

- **Project evaluations:** Stakeholders, including managers, funders and others directly concerned, often at country level, directly use the results of such evaluations. According to FAO policy, OED is responsible for evaluation of all projects, although not all projects are evaluated. OED's role in project evaluations varies, although it is always responsible for quality assurance. In some cases, an OED evaluation professional takes the team leader role, but in most cases, the team leader is a consultant, while OED is responsible for drafting the ToRs, team selection, and quality assurance of the draft evaluation report and ensuring that the management response process is initiated.

58   The number of evaluations completed each year of the past five years, by type, is shown in table 5.

59   OED also prepares a biennial Programme Evaluation Report that is presented at the Conference. Standard across the last three reports—2007, 2009, and 2011—have been the following sections:

- New developments in evaluation in FAO

- UN system collaboration in evaluation

Table 5 Number of Completed Evaluations by Type, 2007–11

| | Number of evaluations by year of completion | | | |
Year	Evaluations for the Governing Bodies	Country	Project (OED team leader)	Project (backstopped/ managed by OED)
2007	5	2	2	22
2008	1	2	5	16
2009	3	2	6	14
2010	5	1	2	17
2011	4	3	1	26

- The evaluation program of the organization, which provides a listing of the evaluation outputs over the 2006–07 biennium and the work plan of major evaluations for the forthcoming biennium

- Evaluation briefs on the major evaluations completed during the biennium and provided to the Governing Bodies. In the briefs, a summary of the management response and the reaction of the Programme Committee are provided in addition to the evaluation itself. Each brief is cross-referenced to the complete documentation on the evaluation website.

60 The 2011 Programme Evaluation Report introduced a new section that draws common lessons from evaluations undertaken during the biennium.

OED's approach to development of the program of work

61 OED produces a three-year Indicative Rolling Workplan of Strategic and Programme Evaluations (evaluations to the Governing Bodies) that is discussed every 18–24 months with the Programme Committee. During this, the Programme Committee effectively selects which among the suggested evaluations are the priorities and, therefore, to be carried out in the coming years. It is important, however, to understand that the Programme Committee is focused on two particular areas. In the main, the Programme Committee indicates which strategic/program level evaluations should be carried out, as a matter of priority, from the list of options provided by FAO. This list does not include the program of project evaluations. The Programme Committee also does not select the countries where country evaluations will be carried out, although it does influence this selection, as syntheses of country evaluations are discussed by the Programme Committee and it indicates what types of countries these syntheses should focus upon.

62 The approach to the identification of specific evaluations, therefore, depends upon the type of evaluation:

- **Evaluations for the Governing Bodies:** Criteria for selecting evaluations include the following: specific requests from the Programme Committee; requirements for evaluation expressed by the Director-General; and the need to achieve a balanced coverage of the organization's strategies and priorities over the medium term. In practice, the OED presents a list of possible evaluations from which the Programme Committee then selects the most important. In 2010, the Programme Committee started discussing the selection of evaluations of FAO's major voluntary funded interventions in the area of emergencies

as part of an overall discussion of the rolling work plan for emergencies-related evaluations. Previously, this rolling work plan was included as an annex to the main work plan presented to the Programme Committee, but not discussed.

- **Country evaluations:** The Programme Committee endorses the types of countries to be reviewed in its periodic examinations of the OED's rolling work plan. OED then selects countries for evaluation on the basis of a set of weighted criteria developed by OED. The criteria are largely based on the size of the FAO program in the country and development indicators, particularly those related to the importance of agriculture in the overall economy. Other factors taken into consideration include the context (that is, where significant changes in the country might signal a need for an external review), FAO planning processes (that is, countries in which FAO is preparing a new cooperation framework), and other triggers, such as the turnover of an FAO representative or a sudden increase in the country portfolio, such as may occur following a large scale disaster. In addition, OED's current procedures for the Evaluation of FAO's Work on Emergency and Rehabilitation state that large country E&R portfolios (representing more than 50 percent of the total country portfolio and annual E&R funding over $10 million) are subject to evaluation. Such evaluations are broadened to include all FAO's work, in order to give a full perspective. Six country evaluations carried out so far have been selected on that basis.

- **Project evaluations:** Project evaluations are usually carried out when considered most useful by project managers and OED. Until 2009, OED waited for the relevant program managers to alert it when a project evaluation was to be carried out. However, OED concluded that in a number of cases, this meant that evaluations required under the policy of FAO were not being carried out. It, therefore, moved to a more pro-active approach to identification of project evaluations for the coming year. From 2009, it has used FAO's Field Programme Management Information System (FPMIS) to identify all projects in which an evaluation is scheduled and then approached the program managers to verify this. This produces the listing of probable project evaluations for the coming calendar year.

63   Assessing the degree to which Evaluations for the Governing Bodies have achieved balanced coverage of the organization's strategies and priorities over the medium term is complex. To some degree, one can assess against the degree to which the 11 current FAO Strategic Objectives have been covered by the evaluations over the past few years. This is complicated by two factors. First, the objectives identified in the FAO medium term strategic framework 2006–10 do not easily map across onto the strategic objectives found in the current strategic framework. Second, OED have found it challenging in several cases to easily scope all of the work that needs to be assessed under particular strategic objectives. What can be said is that OED evaluations have covered to a varying extent evaluated activities under 10 of the 11 strategic objectives. The major exception is under Strategic Objective A (sustainable intensification of crop production), which has not been evaluated to any extent since 2003, although it is found in the current indicative program of work.

OED approach to consultation

64   All OED-managed evaluations, regardless of type, include consultation with key internal and external stakeholders at defined points during the evaluation cycle.

The number of stakeholders and extent of consultation with each varies depending upon the type of evaluation (thematic and country evaluation teams consult with more stakeholders than do project evaluation teams). For evaluations presented to the Governing Bodies, initial consultations on the evaluation and its timing take place before including the evaluation proposal in the OED program of evaluations discussed with the Programme Committee. Subsequent consultation will then take place during the conceptualization period for the evaluation (typically on the terms of reference and concept note, if any). Finally, there is an opportunity to comment when the draft report is completed. For major evaluations (thematic/strategic and country) and all project evaluations, there is also a debriefing with stakeholders after the field visits and before starting the drafting of the report. For country evaluations, a first debriefing takes place with FAO country staff and non-FAO stakeholders, particularly with government representatives and resource partners. Depending on the operational and technical backstopping arrangements, the evaluation team will also debrief with the FAO staff from the regional or subregional office before a debriefing for FAO Headquarters staff.

65 Consultative groups have been used in some, but not all evaluations. For evaluations to the Governing Bodies, consultative groups were used for two evaluations where much of the subject matter work was donor-financed and the involved resource partners were the major audience for these evaluations. Consultative groups have also been used for the country evaluations. The consultative group is intended to act as a forum to inform interested parties in the evaluation and seek their views on issues. Membership is drawn from the national representatives of Rome-based donors and participating countries in the program. The groups meet two to three times during the course of the evaluation—usually when preparing the terms of reference, at the end of the inception phase, and when the draft report was ready for discussion.

Quality assurance

66 Expert panels are often used for evaluations to the Governing Bodies that cover technical topics. These meet either once or twice during the course of the evaluations. If once, the purpose is to review the draft report for technical soundness and particularly assess the soundness of the proposed recommendations. Some expert panels have met twice, the first time before the evaluation starts, to review draft terms of reference and suggest topics/areas of inquiry that should be added to the evaluation. Panels typically consist of five to eight persons and members are normally expected to work for three days in total. Members of expert panels are often drawn from bilateral or multilateral agencies, academics working in the same field or other eminent persons.

67 OED, in the past, has also experimented with using professional evaluators to review the evaluation ToRs and draft report. This approach was judged to be too expensive compared with the value gained and therefore ceased several years ago.

68 Internally, responsibility for development of the scope of an evaluation and initial drafting of the ToRs lies with the Evaluation Manager. The Evaluation Manager is also supposed to always be responsible for definition and application of the evaluation methodology, often expanded upon in either a concept or approach paper. These

papers are shared with management for comment, which therefore has an opportunity to comment on the methodology, as part of the quality assurance process. The extent to which the Team Leader, who is always a consultant in the cases of evaluations to the Governing Bodies and country evaluations, is responsible for drafting of the final ToRs and evaluation approach varies; dependent upon how far into the design process the Team Leader is employed and to some extent, practice of the individual Evaluation Managers. Team leaders are then responsible for drafting the evaluation document. Experience suggests that at least in some cases maintaining the implied balance between the roles of the Team Leader and Evaluation Manager for ensuring a quality first draft evaluation report has been challenging.

69   OED has started to formalize its internal quality assurance process in the past year, with an internal peer review system being introduced in mid-2011. There is insufficient experience to judge its effectiveness. Guidance for assessing the quality of ToRs for both project and higher-level evaluation were finalized in late 2011, although it is too early yet to assess the effectiveness of this guidance.

70   Internal OED guidance also states that the Director of the Office of Evaluation has the ultimate institutional responsibility for the quality and independence of the evaluation process and report and for ensuring that the ToR are met in a timely, efficient and effective manner. Essentially, this approach sees OED's main role as being to quality assure the process and product, rather than assume direct ownership of the process and product. However, it is not straightforward or transparent how quality assurance is ensured, as the Director cannot directly change evaluation findings and recommendations. The only lever available is that he/she may require improvements in the evidence base and in the presentation of findings and recommendations in the draft evaluation report.

Follow-up of evaluations

71   OED produces Evaluation Briefs for evaluations to the FAO Conference, although no evidence was collected on how these are used.

72   Since 2006, there has been a requirement that all evaluations must have a management response (MR). In these, FAO management gives its overall assessment of the evaluation report and for each recommendation states whether it is accepted, partially accepted or rejected. Management responses then use a standard tabular format, with six columns: (i) Recommendation; (ii) Whether accepted/partially accepted/rejected (can also comment on the recommendation here); (iii) Action to be taken; (iv) Responsible unit; (v) Timeframe; and (vi) Whether further funding required to implement.

73   The Charter also mandates the preparation of a follow-up report, so codifying previous practice. This is prepared one year after completion of the management response for project and country evaluations; and two years later for evaluations to the Governing Bodies. While follow-up reports for evaluations to the Governing Bodies are submitted to the Programme Committee, there is no forum in place in which follow-up reports for either country or project evaluations are discussed.

74   Management is responsible for preparing both management responses and follow-up reports for evaluations to the Governing Bodies, with the process in both cases being coordinated through the Evaluation Committee. OED's role is to

formally request to management that these documents be prepared and check that the contents meet required standards of comprehensiveness and clarity. For country evaluations, responsibility for producing both management responses and follow-up reports lies with the FAO Representative in-country. Again, OED's role is to check that the contents meet required standards of comprehensiveness and clarity. In all cases, once the management responses and follow-up reports are agreed, OED loads them onto its website and into FAO's Field Programme Management Information System.

75 In preparing management responses and follow-up reports, management is expected to seek inputs, as necessary, from parties within and outside of FAO to whom the evaluation recommendations are addressed. Operational responsibilities are as follows:

- Evaluation reports for the Programme Committee: The Evaluation Committee will designate the senior officer who will have overall responsibility for coordinating the preparation of the management response and follow-up report. The management response and follow-up report should be completed within four weeks of the request and be sent to OED (see Annex I). The follow-up report will be submitted to the Programme Committee two years after the Evaluation report and its management response have been discussed by the Committee itself.

- Country Evaluations: The FAO Representative will normally be responsible for coordinating the preparation of the management response and the follow-up report to the evaluation. The management response and follow-up report should be completed within four weeks of the request and sent to OED. The follow-up report will be prepared one year after the management response. Governments should be encouraged to provide their own response to the evaluation.

- Project Evaluations: The project budget holder (person within FAO operations responsible for the budget) will normally be responsible for coordinating the preparation of the management response and the follow-up report to the evaluation. The management response and follow-up report should be completed within four weeks of the request and be sent to OED. The follow-up report will be prepared one year after the management response.

- Evaluations of Emergency and Rehabilitation Programmes and Projects: The Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation Division will normally be responsible for coordinating the preparation of the management response and follow-up report. The management response and follow-up report should be completed within four weeks of the request and sent to OED. The follow-up report will be prepared one year after the management response.

76 Experience so far has shown that there is room for improving the way follow-up reports are prepared, both in terms of improving transparency and the accuracy of information presented. In 2010, the Programme Committee, therefore, requested that follow-up reports to evaluations include "the programme and policy impact stemming from the implementation of the recommendations of evaluation." This additional information is intended to make a stronger feed-back loop between policy/program implementation and evaluation. The Committee subsequently requested OED to propose a methodology for validating follow-up reports for

evaluations to the Governing Bodies. In response, OED has managed validation of the follow-up report to the management response for the evaluation of FAO's role and work related to water, which was submitted to the Programme Committee in May 2012.

4.5 Evaluation Guidelines

77 OED has been working on the development of internal guidelines for the past three years, and this process is ongoing, with various guidelines produced recently or still under preparation. Guidelines laying out roles and responsibilities have been produced:

- Roles and responsibilities in FAO evaluations (May, 2010)

- Responsibilities and procedures for management responses and follow-up reports on evaluations (June, 2011)

78 Guidelines setting out the evaluation process for the various types of evaluations are either under preparation or drafted:

- Guidance Note for the Conduct of Evaluations for the Governing Bodies, (under preparation)

- Guidance Note for the Conduct of Country Evaluations (November, 2011)

- Step-by-step procedures for the separate evaluation of voluntary-funded initiatives (November, 2011)

- Proposal for testing a validation mechanism of follow-up reports to evaluations' management responses (draft)

79 Guidelines for quality assurance:

- Tools for Quality Assurance of OED evaluation terms of reference and reports (November, 2011)

- Template terms of reference for the separate evaluation of projects and programs funded through voluntary contributions by resource partners (October, 2011)

80 Looking across the guidelines produced to date, the focus has been on developing guidance on the process, rather than on the substantive issues related to evaluation, in particular, methodology.

Notes

1. Programme Evaluation in response to acute emergencies—this will remain the bulk of E&R evaluations. These evaluations examine the totality of FAO's response to a crisis, from prevention, preparedness, and early warning to crisis impact and needs assessment, immediate response, and recovery. The timing will be such that results can be assessed and lessons drawn for similar crises.

2. Countries for which the portfolio of E&R intervention exceeds 50 percent (volume of funding per year over a five year period) of the total portfolio and with an annual E&R funding over $10 million.

3. At its 103rd session in April 2010, the Programme Committee expressed concern about the number of FAO projects that do not contain budgetary provisions for independent evaluation. In its report, the Committee stressed that the June 2007 decision of the Council should be respected by donors and brought to their attention where necessary by the FAO Secretariat. The Committee requested that FAO report to it on the implementation of the Council decision, and this will be done at the October 2011 session. In order to fully implement the June 2007 decision, the Technical Cooperation Department issued Field Programme Circular (FP 2011/01) in March 2011. FP 2011/01 formally established the Trust Fund for Evaluation of Technical Cooperation for Development called for by the Council decision, which will be used to carry out strategic and thematic evaluations in areas where there is a large field program component.

5 THE UTILITY OF THE FAO EVALUATION FUNCTION AND EVALUATIONS

81   Reference points for the assessment are the following UNEG Norms for Evaluation:

UNEG Norm 1.3: Evaluation feeds into management and decision making processes, and makes an essential contribution to managing for results. Evaluation informs the planning, programme, budgeting, implementation and reporting cycle. It aims at improving the institutional relevance and the achievement of results, optimizing the use of resources, providing client satisfaction and maximizing the impact of the contribution of the UN system.

UNEG Norm 2.6: The Governing Bodies and/or Heads of organizations and of the evaluation functions are responsible for ensuring that evaluation contributes to decision making and management. They should ensure that a system is in place for explicit planning for evaluation and for systematic consideration of the findings, conclusions and recommendations contained in evaluations. They should ensure appropriate follow-up measures including an action plan, or equivalent appropriate tools, with clear accountability for the implementation of the approved recommendations.

UNEG Norm 2.7: The Governing Bodies and/or Heads of organizations and of the evaluation functions are responsible for ensuring that there is a repository of evaluations and a mechanism for distilling and disseminating lessons to improve organizational learning and systemic improvement. They should also make evaluation findings available to stakeholders and other organizations of the UN system as well as to the public.

UNEG Norm 4.1: Proper application of the evaluation function implies that there is a clear intent to use evaluation findings. In the context of limited resources, the planning and selection of evaluation work has to be carefully done. Evaluations must be chosen and undertaken in a timely manner so that they can and do inform decision-making with relevant and timely information. Planning for evaluation must be an explicit part of planning and budgeting of the evaluation function and/or the organization as a whole. Annual or multi-year evaluation work programmes should be made public.

UNEG Norm 4.2: The evaluation plan can be the result of a cyclical or purposive selection of evaluation topics. The purpose, nature and scope of evaluation must be clear to evaluators and stakeholders. The plan for conducting each evaluation must ensure due process to ascertain the timely completion of the mandate, and consideration of the most cost-effective way to obtain and analyze the necessary information.

UNEG Norm 10.1: Transparency and consultation with the major stakeholders are essential features in all stages of the evaluation process. This improves the credibility and quality of the evaluation. It can facilitate consensus building and ownership of the findings, conclusions and recommendations.

UNEG Norm 10.2: Evaluation Terms of Reference and reports should be available to major stakeholders and be public documents. Documentation on evaluations in easily consultable and readable form should also contribute to both transparency and legitimacy.

UNEG Norm 12.1: Evaluation requires an explicit response by the governing authorities and management addressed by its recommendations. This may take

the form of a management response, action plan and/or agreement clearly stating responsibilities and accountabilities.

UNEG Norm 12.2: There should be a systematic follow-up on the implementation of the evaluation recommendations that have been accepted by management and/or the Governing Bodies.

UNEG Norm 12.3: There should be a periodic report on the status of the implementation of the evaluation recommendations. This report should be presented to the Governing Bodies and/ or the Head of the organization.

UNEG Norm 13.1: Evaluation contributes to knowledge building and organizational improvement. Evaluations should be conducted and evaluation findings and recommendations presented in a manner that is easily understood by target audiences.

UNEG Norm 13.2: Evaluation findings and lessons drawn from evaluations should be accessible to target audiences in a user-friendly way. A repository of evaluation could be used to distil lessons that contribute to peer learning and the development of structured briefing material for the training of staff. This should be done in a way that facilitates the sharing of learning among stakeholders, including the organizations of the UN system, through a clear dissemination policy and contribution to knowledge networks

5.1 Are the Relevant Systems Identified in the UNEG Norms and Standards in Place?

82   Overall, discussion with senior management represented on the Evaluation Committee and representatives of the Programme Committee indicate that evaluations to the Governing Bodies are perceived to be useful, even though some are seen as better than others. As discussed in Section 8.2 below, the views of other key stakeholders, in particular FAO operational managers and in-country stakeholders, on the usefulness of the evaluations were not sought. Interviews with OED staff would, however, suggest that for evaluations to the Governing Bodies, FAO operational managers have mixed views on the value of the evaluations, and this would be expected. In terms of the country evaluations, as discussed below, the utility of the evaluations in many cases can be questioned. Until recently, FAO lacked a country-based programming approach and supporting systems, which negatively influenced the utility of the country-level evaluations.

83   Most of the systems that would be expected for an evaluation function responding to the UNEG Norms and Standards on usefulness are in place. It is, however, important to bear in mind that our findings and conclusions focus on the systems and approaches used for evaluations to the Governing Bodies and country evaluations and that the situation may be different for the project evaluations. Systems in place include the following:

a. A system for planning the program of evaluations and for systematic consideration of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations contained in evaluations

b. Evaluation topics are chosen and undertaken in a timely manner with the intention that they inform decision making with relevant and timely information. Broad criteria used in the identification of evaluations have also been drafted and are available for external parties to see.

c. The program of evaluations is discussed with both the Programme Committee and FAO senior management and the final program of evaluations is publically available.

d. Practice has been for findings and recommendations to be discussed with stakeholders before being issued in the final report. In the case of the major evaluations, this is usually done in a dedicated meeting, at which the team leader also participates. The compilation of "Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations of Selected Cross-cutting Evaluations (2008–2012)" prepared by FAO management and the recent appointment of a knowledge management specialist within OED are indicators of a move towards more systematically disseminating lessons from the evaluations to the Governing Bodies to improve organizational learning.

e. Management responses are required for all evaluations and include whether management accept the evaluation recommendations, what actions will be taken to implement accepted recommendations, who is responsible for implementation of the response, and the envisaged timescale and budgetary implications.

f. Depending upon the type of evaluation, follow-up reports on whether the agreed actions have been undertaken are produced either one or two years after acceptance of the management response.

g. The revitalized Evaluation Committee provides a forum through which evaluation feeds into management and decision-making processes within the organization. The Evaluation Committee reviews all management responses and follow-up reports for major evaluations before their submission to the Programme Committee. The Evaluation Committee has also decided recently that it needs to engage with program managers on the implementation of recommendations for key major evaluations, even before follow-up reports for the Programme Committee are due.

h. All evaluations are now available on the OED website, as are the management responses and follow-up reports. In addition, in most cases, the evaluation annexes are also available.

84   Two further areas for action related to usefulness identified in the IPA that have not yet been implemented are the following:

▪ The evaluation office should have an institutionalized advisory role to management on results-based management and programming and budgeting, reinforcing the feedback and learning loop. This was included in the Charter, but neither OED nor senior management have made any efforts to operationalize this role, despite the issue of how the RBM system should be revised and strengthened being a significant area of work within FAO over the past 18 months.

▪ The IPA also states that follow-up processes for evaluation should be fully institutionalized, including an independent monitoring system for follow-up. OED is the only independent body in position to assume this role and this request would seem to respond to the UNEG Norm 12.3 that suggests production of a periodic report on the status of the implementation of the evaluation recommendations. OED is not explicitly assigned the role of developing and

managing an independent monitoring system for follow-up under the Charter. Rather, in the Charter, it is assigned the normal role found in other independent evaluation functions of coordinating the timely reporting on the implementation of those evaluation recommendations by program management. However, responding to the requests of the Programme Committee, which has reservations over the quality of evidence presented in current follow-up reports produced by program management, OED has started to produce validation reports that examine follow-up in some depth. The first of these, dealing with FAO's work on water, was recently discussed by the Programme Committee, which has asked OED to introduce a similar approach in a cost-effective manner for other major evaluations in the future. This developing approach could be seen as a less comprehensive approach to addressing the issue raised in both the IPA request and UNEG Norm 12.3 as it does not cover all evaluations discussed by the Programme Committee. On the other hand, it is more detailed at the level of examining follow-up for the individual evaluations included.

5.2 Issues Associated with Operationalization of the Current Systems and Approaches

85 Discussion with stakeholders and review of a selection of evaluations produced in the past three years reveals that OED, the Programme Committee, and senior management are encountering a number of challenges to the usefulness of the evaluations and in the effectiveness of the systems/approaches currently in place. Many of these are issues the peer reviewers are familiar with as they have also been challenges within their own organizations and in other organizations with which they are familiar.

What is a strategic evaluation?

86 As the name suggests, the main audience for evaluations to the Governing Bodies is the Programme Committee and then the Director-General and senior management. The 2007 IEE review of the FAO evaluation function found that every member of the Programme Committee and the Chair of the Finance Committee affirmed in interviews that none of the Governing Bodies used the findings of evaluations in making decisions on the overall strategic direction of the organization and resource allocation—and that, in principle, they thought that they should. The IEE review also found only limited use of evaluation for strategic decision making by senior FAO management. Our overall conclusion is that the situation today remains much the same. Programme and Evaluation Committee members interviewed as part of this review commented upon the fact that recommendations are often not strategic—a judgment acknowledged as correct by OED.

87 The Peer Reviewers believe that this needs to change as evaluation is not cost free and needs to respond to the facts that:

- FAO operates in a rapidly changing world, where explicitly meeting country level demands and demonstrating results and contribution will become increasingly important;

- FAO does not have access to the resources that would be required to meet every demand and, therefore, is under pressure to show increased focus on areas in which it can demonstrate significant added value based on its comparative advantage, and

- The UN needs to get greater value from evaluation.

88   Moving towards more strategic evaluation and strategic use of evaluations requires both change in what the Programme Committee and the Director-General and Evaluation Committee see as the purpose of strategic evaluations and then how they are used. For example, as discussed below, it requires ensuring that evaluation is firmly embedded in the RBM system. It also implies a greater role for evidence from evaluations to the Governing Bodies in informing strategic resource allocation decision making within the organization. Finally, as discussed elsewhere, it implies a lesser focus in the evaluation recommendations on telling operational management in detail what it should do, and how.

89   This requires a number of changes in OED's current approach to evaluation. First, strategic recommendations depend upon asking strategic questions. Within this context, the four strategic questions that would be common across most evaluations for the Governing Bodies would be the following: (i) What have FAO's results been? (ii) Does this show that FAO has a comparative advantage? (iii) If FAO has a clear comparative advantage, what does the organization have to do to enhance significantly its contribution and strengthen its comparative advantage? (iv) Does the evidence suggest that the organization has no clear comparative advantage and should withdraw from a particular area of support?

90   Second, a strategic approach implies more use of synthesis of lessons and experience across separate evaluations. This approach has already started in FAO, with presentation of syntheses of the country evaluations to the Programme Committee, rather than the individual country reports. The greater use of syntheses is under active consideration by UNDP's Evaluation Office (the UN evaluation function most similar in role to OED) for similar reasons and is already well-established practice in both the GEF and the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is also seen in a number of multilateral agencies where the Governing Body is a major client for evaluations and in IFAD, which produces an "Annual Report on Results and Impact of IFAD operations." Such approaches have the dual advantage of both managing demands upon the time of the Governing Body, while also addressing the fact that many strategic issues are systemic by nature. The issue here is that many evaluations will identify the same problem or challenge with the organization's approach or systems, and then propose different recommendations on how to address what is actually the same systemic problem or challenge. This is not an effective approach in that it raises the risk that management, in agreeing the recommendations from separate evaluations, may end up agreeing to implement a series of recommendations addressing the same problem or challenge, rather than one strategic approach to addressing the underlying systemic cause of the problem.

Is there evidence that evaluation is having the desired effect?

91   The Programme Committee has expressed concerns that the current evaluation follow-up reports only report on the extent to which the agreed actions have been implemented. As such, they provide no evidence on whether implementation of the actions agreed in the management response has had the intended outcomes on the organization's effectiveness. This is, of course, difficult as it almost requires carrying out further evaluative work.

92   As mentioned above, the OED has, at the request of the Programme Committee, recently produced a validation report to the Programme Committee on the follow-up to the evaluation of FAO's work on water. The expectation is that OED will assume a greater role in assessing the impact of recommendations for other major evaluations in the future. While understanding why the Programme Committee has had such concerns, it should be noted that it is not normal practice in other organizations for the independent evaluation function to assume this role and the Panel would suggest caution before it becomes general practice for OED to assume such a role. The Panel's view is that, as in other organizations, it is management's responsibility to provide credible evidence on the effect of implementation of an accepted recommendation. The Panel, therefore, suggests that the Programme Committee, OED, and senior management consider the approach adopted in organizations, such as the World Bank and GEF, in which Management Action Records (where management rates its level of adoption of a recommendation) have been used and management's rating/judgment on actual implementation is subsequently verified by the independent evaluation function. In such approaches, responsibility for providing credible evidence of change remains with management, rather than the evaluation function.

The implications of meeting demand for how coverage is addressed in evaluation programming.

93   The current approach to coverage and how this links to demand for both the evaluations to the Governing Bodies and for country evaluations are described above in paragraphs 62–63. For the evaluations to the Governing Bodies, ensuring coverage of all of the strategic objectives identified in the FAO Strategic Framework 2010–19, and its predecessor, has been a major factor in identification of evaluations.[1] While the OED work plan is not straightforward mapping across the strategic objectives in the 2010–19 and predecessor framework, it has covered all of the significant substantive areas of FAO work across the two frameworks. In some cases, evaluations have covered an entire strategic objective. In most cases, evaluations have been scoped to evaluate specific large coherent programs of work where expenditure has been significant, but not all work is under a specific objective. This has been because OED has frequently found it difficult to clearly delineate the scope of an evaluation, if the strategic objective is used. Looking forward, the current intention of the Director-General is that the new FAO strategic framework under development include fewer but, by implication, broader strategic objectives that focus on outcomes to which FAO contributes. Based on past experience, scoping individual evaluations within these broad outcomes will continue to be an issue for OED.

94   In some agencies, ensuring systematic coverage is not an issue, as the evaluation function evaluates the entire portfolio of projects. This is not possible in FAO's case, where the approach currently used is very similar to that observed for most other independent UN evaluation functions, such as UNDP's Evaluation Office, where strategic evaluations presented to the Executive Board are identified through consultations with the Executive Board, senior management, the associated funds and programs and other stakeholders, and in response to emerging issues that the Evaluation Office may identify. Ensuring systematic coverage against the organization's strategic objectives is difficult in such approaches, especially if the organization's strategic objectives are broad in nature, because the available evaluation

resources—time, money and management/administrative capacity—mean it is difficult to evaluate the whole objective. This issue that will become more pertinent to FAO, if the current proposal to have five overall strategic objectives is implemented. However, we still believe that FAO's evaluation programming can be made more systematic and criteria based than the current process.

95 In terms of country evaluations, coverage of the whole portfolio has not been a significant intent to date. Instead, within the three broad country situations identified by the Programme Committee, OED has selected particular countries— primarily based on the existence of a significant FAO program by expenditure. Looking forward, as the country program framework approach becomes more established, coverage to allow generalization of findings from individual country evaluations to FAO's performance across the overall population of countries in which it operates may become worthwhile, depending upon demand from the Programme Committee and senior management.

The Governing Bodies' and senior management's capacity to make good use of the evaluations

96 Translation of the full reports and management responses into all official languages is a significant investment, although probably needed given that practice is for the Programme Committee to consider the full evaluation report and management response. In some cases, understanding the recommendations and management's response requires familiarity with the report. Programme Committee members and FAO senior managers expressed divergent opinions over whether the volume of evaluations being presented was straining capacity to both prepare them to meet the Programme Committee's schedule and then effectively consider them. All stakeholders believe that the large number of recommendations in each evaluation has further increased demands upon time and that these need to be reduced in number. However, while all parties want to reduce the number of recommendations to be considered, the consensus also appears to be that the number of evaluations should not increase further. To some extent, if the suggested move to greater use of syntheses of evaluations by senior management and the Programme Committee is implemented, this should help to manage the volume of work implied. But any further increase in the volume of evaluations needs to be also considered in relation to the anticipated increase in OED funding outlined in table 2 and whether any future increase in the budget of OED could be put to better use. For example:

- As discussed below under credibility, our view is that OED should increasingly take a stronger evaluation manager, or even team leader, role in evaluations to the Governing Bodies and country evaluations. This will inevitably require more time from the OED staff in a situation in which most of the more experienced evaluation staff are already fully occupied and possibly a reduction in the overall number of evaluations.

- We also, under our discussion of credibility, suggest that the application of evaluation methods needs to be strengthened in OED evaluations. If these approaches are to be implemented in line with good practice, it will inevitably increase the cost of individual evaluations.

- A strategic advisory role in development and implementation of FAO's RBM system will also require time from OED senior staff. We suspect that once engaged,

following experience from other independent evaluation functions, OED will need to consider what it can do to improve the overall evaluability of FAO's support.

- Experience with such organizations as UNDP and the GEF indicates that once the country evaluation approach is well established, the demand for such evaluations grows. Given the introduction of the country program framework by FAO and the intention to increasingly program at the country program level, this experience is likely to be replicated in FAO.

How many recommendations should there be and what type of recommendation should be drafted?

97   All stakeholders identified a number of challenges with both the number and type of recommendations found in evaluations. These are all issues that are well known within the evaluation community and where there is now significant experience on how they may be managed.

98   We share the view of many of those interviewed that recommendations are often too detailed and prescriptive. While the Programme and Evaluation Committee members have identified the problem as being that the evaluation recommendations are often not strategic, there is a further danger with the present approach. It subverts the role of management, which is ultimately responsible for working out how things should be done, and leads to a scenario in which evaluations increasingly evaluate recommendations from previous evaluations since the recommendations have detailed what should be done, rather than what needs to change. OED is aware of the problem with recommendations being not strategic and instead being too detailed and prescriptive. It asserts that the staff has tried to both reduce the number of evaluation recommendations and worked to ensure that they are more strategic. Our review of recent evaluations presented to the Programme Committee suggests that progress has been made but more remains to be done.

99   The Peer Reviewers' believe that the problems with the type of recommendations currently found in evaluations to the Governing Bodies partly reflects issues with who leads on evaluations carried out by OED. As discussed below under credibility, current OED practice is to use external team leaders, who are often technical specialists in the area under evaluation. It is these team leaders who are responsible for the formulation of recommendations. Perhaps unsurprisingly, technical specialists are often as interested in telling FAO how it should do things as in telling FAO what it needs to do differently. As formal and transparent systems for managing this risk (such as guidance on how the formulation of recommendations should be approached) are not in place, the observed behavior is, therefore, perhaps not surprising. Review of the ToRs for team leaders and OED's 2010 paper laying out the roles and responsibilities of the team leaders relative to the OED evaluation managers and Director also indicate that OED has no formal role in the development of, or assessment of feasibility of, evaluation recommendations. In practice, evaluation managers to varying degrees play, informally, a role in the formulation of recommendations. But individual OED Evaluation Managers take differing approaches to this challenge and with hindsight it is probable that there has not been sufficient investment in developing a common approach across the office on how development of recommendations should be addressed. To some

extent, these issues will be resolved, if the Peer Review's suggestions on enhancing the credibility of evaluations are accepted and implemented.

100　In terms of wider experience in how to approach development of strategic recommendations, the experience of the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been that synthesis reports or even systematic reviews can be a useful tool, as they normally produce more generic findings that then lead to more strategic recommendations. The Policy and Operations Evaluation Department's experience has been that this approach raises questions over whether evaluations should make recommendations on strategic level and instead focus on clearly identifying the issues or challenges that have to be tackled, while leaving it to management to decide how they are to be tackled.

101　The experience of strategic evaluations rapidly leading to a situation in which the sheer number of recommendations strains management's capacity to both implement and track implementation of them and the Board's capacity to maintain adequate oversight of their implementation and effects has been seen elsewhere. This was clearly seen when the World Bank's Independent Evaluation Group, for example, introduced "management action records" at the turn of the millennium. These records were intended to track the level of adoption of recommendations, but their introduction quickly led to the realization that too many recommendations lead to such a bulky annual report on the level of adoption of recommendations that it becomes unreadable. The Bank's Independent Evaluation Group as a result decided to reduce the number of recommendations per evaluation to just a few strategic ones, so that the level of adoption could be verified in a meaningful way. These considerations were linked to a preference to become more strategic in these recommendations in any case.

What is the purpose of the Country Evaluations?

102　Country evaluations were introduced in 2006 at the request of the Programme Committee. The guidance issued in November 2011 on the purpose of country evaluations states that "Country evaluations aim to improve the relevance and performance of FAO's interventions, providing accountability and deriving lessons for better formulation and implementation of country-level policies, strategies and activities in the future. Country evaluations look at FAO's work from the standpoint of its utility to the country. They provide FAO's stakeholders with a systematic and objective assessment of the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impacts, and sustainability of the programmes and interventions undertaken by FAO in the country. In countries where there is a large portfolio of emergency and rehabilitation activities, evaluations consider the extent to which FAO's work links relief efforts to development, and FAO's operational capacity for timely delivery is a key element of the evaluation's scope. Country evaluations should serve as important inputs into the formulation and review of the Country Programming Framework and FAO contributions to the UNDA." The purpose as outlined follows that found in most other organizations that use country evaluations.

103　OED's view is that country evaluations add value through the following ways : (i) an in-depth review of FAO's value to a country (which ties in well with view of the new Director-General on what the organization needs to focus on); (ii) OED to look at FAO capacity and how the normative role is delivered at country level; and

(iii) the role between HQ and FAO Representatives. However, in practice, the usefulness of country evaluations to in-country stakeholders and FAO managers has been limited according to evidence presented by involved evaluation managers. This has been because of ambiguity over the role of country-level programming in FAO more broadly. Until recently, FAO's systems and management approaches have not focused at the level of the country program, instead at the level of the individual projects. In consequence, there has not been a clearly defined country programming process into which the country evaluations could be integrated and clearly add value. It has also meant that in-country stakeholders have looked at the relationship and role of FAO in terms of the projects delivered, making it more difficult to engage in a discourse centered on the intended purposes of the country evaluation. Hence, although a management response is produced, it is not entirely clear who is accountable for implementation of the accepted recommendations and systems for oversight of implementation of the recommendations are not in place.

104   Discussions with senior management clearly indicate that under the new Director-General this will change; the organization is currently rolling out the country program framework approach across the program countries and clarifying roles and responsibilities. Experience elsewhere would, therefore, suggest that this is an opportune moment for OED to engage with FAO management on how the country evaluations can be integrated to maximize their value into the developing system. Under such a scenario, the focus of country evaluations would be to (i) identify what are the major challenges in the concerned country in the sectors falling under FAO's mandate, (ii) how and with what results did FAO support the country in addressing these challenges, making use of its comparative advantages, and (iii) in which areas does this demonstrate that FAO has a comparative advantage as a source of support from the perspective of the government and other in-country stakeholders.

The advisory role of an independent evaluation office in an organization's RBM system

105   The Panel has found that FAO shares the difficulties faced by most development cooperation agencies (and others) in putting in place effective systems to manage for results. The IPA called for an institutionalized advisory role for OED to management on RBM, programming, and budgeting be included in the Charter. While we see that this role is indeed included in the Charter, as yet neither OED nor senior management have made any efforts to actually operationalize this role. This is despite the fact that review of how the RBM system should be modified and strengthened being a significant area of work within FAO in the past 18 months. The Panel strongly endorses current efforts to develop a more robust RBM system that has the potential to contribute more to the business process cycle, with increased management "take-up" and urges that the OED's advisory role be institutionalized as soon as possible.

106   Experience more widely suggests that the independent evaluation function must engage for a number of reasons. As stated in the UN Development Group's recent guidance on RBM, evaluation is an essential step in the RBM life cycle.[2] In the context of an organization, such as FAO, where the Charter explicitly states that the OED is responsible for all evaluation within the organization, the effectiveness

of the whole approach is compromised if OED is not engaged. As important for OED, experience elsewhere suggests that engagement with development and operationalization of the organization's RBM system is the main way that an independent evaluation function can work to strengthen the evaluability of the organization's work and interviews with OED evaluation managers clearly indicate that as in most organizations, evaluability is an issue in FAO.

107 We acknowledge that how an independent evaluation function engages in the development and operationalization of an organization's RBM system presents challenges because of the need to maintain independence but also believe that there is sufficient experience from other organizations on how this may be approached. The following are some examples:

- In UNEP, the Evaluation Office undertook a rapid assessment of the evaluability of the results framework, immediately following the preparation of the Draft Strategic Framework and the Programme of Work (PoW) for 2010–11. This assessment examined whether a common vision statement and coherent program logic with results orientation were clearly evident as fundamental principles in the programming documents. It also assessed whether the strategic intent of the reform process was clearly articulated and whether the basic management structures, including the relevant policies and strategies for implementing the RBM system, were in place. This assessment was circulated it to all program planners, managers, and program coordinators. When it became clear that the findings of the assessment were not adequately reflected in the design of the PoW, the Evaluation Office launched a Formative Evaluation of the design of the PoW in the first year of its implementation. The findings were presented to senior managers and the Committee of the Governing Council responsible for programs. The management response accepted most of the recommendations and the UNEP program manual was redrafted with the support of the Evaluation Office to reflect the recommendations. In addition, an RBM training program was launched to reflect, among other things, the theory-based approaches recommended by the Evaluation Office. The Evaluation Office developed and presents the module for planning and evaluating UNEP programs and projects using the theory of change approach.

- In the GEF, one policy guides monitoring and evaluation, to ensure that indicators and data gathering during the implementation of projects are in line with and feed into evaluations that are taking place at the conclusion of projects, as well as thematic and portfolio level evaluations. Gradually, the monitoring has become a basis for RBM as well, which is now included in a systematic way in GEF strategies and policies. The GEF Evaluation Office has continued to provide oversight over monitoring and evaluation at the project level, including the linkages to RBM, and has continued to interact with the RBM team in the Secretariat on the role of monitoring and evaluation in RBM.

Linking evaluation into organizational knowledge management

108 Knowledge management can be understood to comprise a range of practices used in an organization to identify, create, represent, distribute, and enable adoption of new insights and experiences. Such insights and experiences comprise knowledge either embodied in individuals or internalised through organizational processes. In order for OED to contribute to knowledge management, the

information generated by evaluations needs to be credible, digested, usable and accessible as and when needed.

109   The Panel finds that linkages between evaluation knowledge and the wider knowledge management systems of FAO are not in place. The focus of OED's knowledge management activities to date has been with those staff most closely associated with the subject under evaluation and there has been no investment in cross-organizational learning for other program managers. As FAO decentralizes, how to communicate findings and conclusions from evaluations to FAO staff at the regional and country level and other key stakeholders will become a greater challenge.

110   OED's appointment of a knowledge management specialist to strengthen this, until recently neglected, linkage into FAO's wider knowledge management systems is correct and supported by the Panel.

Notes

1. Evaluation of areas identified as problem areas in the IEE and evaluations of thematic areas usually identified by management have been the other two sources for identification of evaluations to the Governing Bodies.

2. UNDG. 2011. Results-Based Management Handbook—Harmonizing RBM Concepts and Approaches for Improved Development Results at Country Level. UN Development Group.

6 THE CREDIBILITY OF THE FAO EVALUATION FUNCTION AND EVALUATIONS

111   The Panel assessed credibility of the evaluation function by reviewing the processes through which evaluations are transparently planned, managed, and conducted and by assessing the quality of evaluation reports and the ways they are disclosed. Reference points for the assessment are the following UNEG Norms for Evaluation in the UN System:

> UNEG Norm 3.1: Each organization should develop an explicit policy statement on evaluation. The policy should provide a clear explanation of the concept, role and use of evaluation within the organization, including the institutional framework and definition of roles and responsibilities; an explanation of how the evaluation function and evaluations are planned, managed and budgeted; and a clear statement on disclosure and dissemination

> UNEG Norm 2.5: The Governing Bodies and/or Heads of organizations are responsible for appointing a professionally competent Head of the evaluation, who in turn is responsible for ensuring that the function is staffed by professionals competent in the conduct of evaluation.

> UNEG Norm 4.2: The evaluation plan can be the result of a cyclical or purposive selection of evaluation topics. The purpose, nature and scope of evaluation must be clear to evaluators and stakeholders. The plan for conducting each evaluation must ensure due process to ascertain the timely completion of the mandate, and consideration of the most cost-effective way to obtain and analyze the necessary information

> UNEG Norm 5.2: Impartiality increases the credibility of evaluation and reduces the bias in the data gathering, analysis, findings, conclusions and recommendations. Impartiality provides legitimacy to evaluation and reduces the potential for conflict of interest.

> UNEG Norm 8.1: Each evaluation should employ design, planning and implementation processes that are inherently quality oriented, covering appropriate methodologies for data-collection, analysis and interpretation.

> UNEG Norm 8.2: Evaluation reports must present in a complete and balanced way the evidence, findings, conclusions and recommendations. They must be brief and to the point and easy to understand. They must explain the methodology followed, highlight the methodological limitations of the evaluation, key concerns and evidenced-based findings, dissident views and consequent conclusions, recommendations and lessons. They must have an executive summary that encapsulates the essence of the information contained in the report, and facilitate dissemination and distillation of lessons.

> UNEG Norm 9.1: Each organization of the UN system should have formal job descriptions and selection criteria that state the basic professional requirements necessary for an evaluator and evaluation manager.

> UNEG Norm 9.2: The Head of the evaluation function must have proven competencies in the management of an evaluation function and in the conduct of evaluation studies.

UNEG Norm 9.3: Evaluators must have the basic skill set for conducting evaluation studies and managing externally hired evaluators.

UNEG Norm 10.1: Transparency and consultation with the major stakeholders are essential features in all stages of the evaluation process. This improves the credibility and quality of the evaluation. It can facilitate consensus building and ownership of the findings, conclusions and recommendations.

UNEG Norm 10.2: Evaluation Terms of Reference and reports should be available to major stakeholders and be public documents. Documentation on evaluations in easily consultable and readable forms should also contribute to both transparency and legitimacy.

6.1 Are the Relevant Systems Identified in the UNEG Norms and Standards in Place?

112   In the past, credibility in the individual evaluations has been primarily reliant on evaluation practice as interpreted by the individual evaluation managers. Over the past 18 months, this has started to change. OED has started to introduce guidance to strengthen common practice by the evaluation managers and the systems identified under the relevant UNEG Norms are now being put in place. The review further found that the Charter covers the most significant issues involved in ensuring the credibility of the evaluations and the evaluation system.

113   Systems put in place to strengthen the credibility of the evaluation process, and the evaluations, include the following:

a. The Charter, endorsed in 2010, provides a clear explanation of the concept, role, and use of evaluation within the organization, including the institutional framework and definition of roles and responsibilities; an explanation of how the evaluation function and evaluations are planned, managed and budgeted; and a clear statement on disclosure and dissemination.

b. The Charter (paragraph 41) calls for the appointment of a professionally competent Director of OED, who in turn is responsible for the appointment of evaluation staff and the appointment of consultants, in conformity with FAO procedures, that are technical competent and behaviorally independent.

c. Consultants are required to sign the UNEG Code of Conduct for evaluation.

d. Guidelines have been developed for the management and conduct of country evaluations (issued November 2011) and are under preparation for evaluations to the Governing Bodies).

e. Draft guidelines laying out the roles and responsibilities of OED Evaluation Managers, the OED Director, and contracted evaluators have been prepared.

f. Tools for Quality Assurance of OED evaluation terms of reference and reports, November 2011.

g. Template terms of reference for the separate evaluation of projects and programs funded through voluntary contributions by resource partners were completed in June 2011 and are continuously updated.

114   Interviews suggest that OED generally consists of a professionally competent team and the appropriate systems for their recruitment and management are in place. The posts of the current Head and of other evaluation professionals were

externally advertised. The formal qualifications for the OED Director and other professional evaluation staff include criteria for appropriate technical and managerial competencies and experience. These criteria are applied during the selection process, which follows FAO standard recruitment procedures. Further development of the evaluation skills of OED staff relies mainly on the individual initiative of the staff. Job descriptions exist for all OED staff members. Competence and performance are assessed during the annual performance review process, introduced three years ago. Against the relevant UNEG Norms, we would identify one probable oversight with regard to staff recruitment and management, which is that all OED evaluation managers should sign UNEG's Code of Ethics and OED should put in place an oversight mechanism to ensure that it is adhered to, thereby bolstering the perception of the impartiality of the evaluation managers.

115 Although only recently codified, the evaluation process used within OED is the same as found in other agencies, although there are some variations in practice dependent upon the preference of the individual managers.

116 Members of both the Programme and Evaluation Committees interviewed stated that they believe that on the whole evaluations produced by OED are credible. As discussed below, the peer panel believes that this is because the major factor presently determining the credibility of OED evaluations is the team leader's credibility (determined by technical competence, process skills, political weight and broad acceptability, and visible independence from management). As such, the present situation is similar to that found when the FAO evaluation function was assessed as part of the IEE back in 2007.

117 Credibility of the team leader is always important, but the peer panel concludes that OED's heavy reliance on the credibility of the team leader, rather than the overall systems and approaches to ensuring credibility, makes the current evaluation approach unusual. This is both when considered against the approaches suggested in the UNEG Norms but also when compared with other evaluation functions with comparable levels of independence and is discussed in detail in paragraphs 119–122 below.

118 The common theme running through the below discussion of strengthening credibility is the extent to which OED continues to move toward an approach to credibility based on the transparent application of systems and methodologies and away from one based mainly on the credibility of the contracted team leader. As revealed by several of the evaluations reviewed by the Panel, this will necessitate a focus on delivery of evaluations in which the conclusions and recommendations are clearly more based on the transparent application of evaluation methods, rather than the expert-opinion of the team leaders/team members.

6.2 Issues Associated with Operationalization of the Current Systems and Approaches

Whose report?

119 Use of contracted team leaders is the norm for evaluation functions across the UN; although in the multilateral banks and some bilateral donor organizations, an internal member of the evaluation function will often be the team leader. As such, the roles and responsibilities outlined above do not diverge significantly

from the norm across the UN. However, the Panel observed that OED's practice does diverge from the norm in a number of key areas, which affects the approach to credibility of the evaluations.

120 Possibly the most important is that in other organizations where the evaluation function is independent, responsibility for the contents of the evaluation report explicitly lies with the evaluation function and not with the contracted team leader. This is not the case for OED, where in the Charter it states that the evaluation team, rather than OED, is responsible for the findings, conclusions, and recommendations found in evaluation reports, subject to quality assurance by the Office of Evaluation. The Office's role is to assure adherence to the terms of reference and recognized quality standards[1] and timeliness, and to provide information and methodological support to the evaluation team. Our understanding is that OED's present approach reflects past experience, when there was a general belief that staff within the evaluation function were not independent and, therefore, to ensure independence, responsibility for the contents of the evaluations was assigned to the contracted team leaders, who were expected to be independent.

121 Given the subsequent investment in ensuring the OED's independence, this assumption on why independent team leaders were necessary no longer applies and our belief is that OED should move to the situation found in other independent evaluation offices and be fully accountable for the contents of its reports. This is the ultimate guarantor of quality and credibility. It would also support a move away from current practice, where roles and responsibilities of the evaluation manager, team leader, and Director are rarely clear-cut and too dependent upon the personality and goodwill of those involved.

The use of subject matter specialists as team leaders

122 A significant number of evaluations to the Governing Bodies evaluate the technical work of the organization. In these cases, the major criteria used by OED in selection of team leaders have been their technical credibility and lack of previous involvement in the work of FAO. Use of subject matter specialists to lead evaluations to produce expert-opinion based evaluation has a long history in evaluation and is still appropriate in certain circumstances, such as when carrying out a formative evaluation or project level evaluation. However, as observed by OED evaluation managers, finding people with the technical background and a grounding in strategic evaluation is near impossible. One can also question whether technical expertise in the technical area is the most important prerequisite for developing strategic recommendations, as review of the recommendations in evaluations quickly shows that the strategic recommendations often deal with managerial, rather than technical, issues. The consequence of the present practice has been that in most cases ensuring that the evaluation methodology and its implementation depend upon the evaluation manager having a constructive relationship with the team leader and convincing them on what they need to do. Evidence from the evaluations suggests mixed success from the evaluation managers in doing this. By contrast, practice in comparable evaluation functions has been to move away from using technical experts as team leaders for evaluations at the strategic/ organizational level and toward team leaders experienced in team management/ complex evaluation, supported by technical experts. We, therefore, suggest OED move away from selecting team leaders based on their technical competence.

Strengthening consistency in application of evaluation methodology in evaluations

123　The Panel found that most evaluation managers for the evaluations to the Governing Bodies and country evaluations have a strong evaluation background and awareness of evaluation methodology. This is a significant asset.

124　Review of evaluation reports and interviews identified a number of recent evaluations to the Governing Bodies that were credible and excellent expert opinion–based evaluations. In the evaluations to the Governing Bodies reviewed, it was usually difficult to ascertain whether the evaluation methodology outlined in the terms of reference and inception report had actually been applied in implementation. While we readily acknowledge that there may be other evaluations that we did not examine where this finding is not the case, the simple fact that it was in the five that we did review strongly suggests that at a minimum OED needs to ensure more attention to presenting evidence across all of its major evaluations, showing how the proposed methodology was applied and any limitations to the conclusions made because of issues with how the methodology was actually applied. Bearing in mind the evaluability challenges for country evaluations, the Panel also concluded that several of the country evaluations applied a rigorous evaluation approach not primarily based on the expert opinion of the team leaders.

125　Overall, the Panel had concerns about the quality of the evidence presented, especially sources, in a number of cases and the difficulty encountered in judging whether the conclusions and recommendations were based on the evidence presented. Across the five evaluations to the Governing Bodies and all of the completed country evaluations, none systematically followed good practice in terms of discussing either the limitations of the evaluation findings and conclusions arising from methodological issues or data availability.

126　Looking forward, the panel would argue that in a context where OED evaluations will increasingly need to judge whether FAO is delivering results and its contribution, consistent application of methodologies that do not rely mainly on expert opinion will become more important. Consistency in application of evaluation methodology will also become necessary, if OED moves to increased use of synthesis. Methodology also becomes more important for evaluations making judgments of FAO performance at the regional or global level in a context where performance evidence from management systems is poor and evaluations, therefore, need to generalize from evidence drawn from only a limited number of countries or programs.

127　As implied above, moving to an evaluation approach based on the more consistent application of evaluation methodology would be easier if OED were to assume explicit responsibility for the contents and conduct of its evaluations and this were then reflected in the roles and responsibilities of the team leaders and evaluation managers.

128　However, based on experience elsewhere there are other things that OED can consider, such as the following:

- Building on the nascent internal peer review processes as a means to identify where a common understanding of evaluation practice across the evaluation managers and minimum standards is most needed.

- Using the OED Knowledge Management Specialist's experience in designing and facilitating approaches to learning within diverse teams to forge a common understanding of evaluation practice across the evaluation managers and minimum standards that should apply in all evaluations.

- Investing in meta-analysis to provide better information on what program characteristics, outcome domains, and research methods are most likely to be important for particular types of evaluation.

Approaches to quality assurance

129 In the case of evaluations to the Governing Bodies, OED has consistently used panels of subject matter specialists to review evaluation reports and in some cases the approach/concept paper. We agree with this approach.

130 In the past, OED has also experimented with both internal and external peer review approaches to ensure the quality of the evaluation processes adopted. However, these were discontinued and beyond the quality assurance role of the evaluation manager, responsibility has mostly lain with the Director to ensure the quality of the evaluations.

131 OED introduced a set of Tools for Quality Assurance of OED evaluation terms of reference and reports in November 2011, which the Panel thinks clearly set out the issues that need to be assessed in an internal peer review process. It is too early to judge how well this approach will work, but the Panel has observed that these approaches work most effectively when there has been sufficient investment in ensuring a common understanding across the internal peer reviewers of how the various standards should be judged. For instance, OED might consider the approach used in the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where two colleagues are appointed to co-read evaluation drafts and play a collegiate, rather than judgmental, role through the whole evaluation process. OED should also consider whether its current approach to feedback meetings with stakeholders during execution of the evaluation could be better used as an opportunity to enhance quality—as has been found in a number of other organizations. An additional advantage of re-examining how to use consultation processes during evaluation implementation would be for identifying opportunities to enhance learning as part of evaluation process, thereby lessening reliance on learning from the final documents.

Evaluability and what to evaluate against

132 The impression of the Panel is that evaluability[2] is severely and consistently constrained at a number of levels. At the strategic organizational level, evaluability has been constrained by deficiencies in the strategic results frameworks in place and failure to operationalize the RBM system. At country and project levels, it has often been constrained by a lack of clarity on what was supposed to be contributed (relevance and design of the expected outcome statements and results matrices), poor or absent indicators of performance, and nonexistent monitoring systems.

133 As stated before, these problems are not unique to FAO, but we have observed that comparable evaluation functions are increasingly looking to engage with management on how to address them.

Transparency and consultation

134   Overall, the OED approach to both consultation and transparency of the evaluation process is in line with that of other UN evaluation functions and the UNEG Norms. However, we would note that practice within the office to consultation has varied across the evaluations and needs to become both more systematic and consistently applied within evaluations. This applies particularly to the country evaluations, if the country level stakeholders are to become major users of the evaluations. In such cases, engagement by country level stakeholders often extends beyond consultation to fostering their active participation in the scoping and focus of the evaluations.

Notes

1. Following the logic of this approach, OED has introduced (November 2011) quality tools for the evaluation terms of reference and evaluation report. Introduction of these tools is welcomed by the Panel, although we discuss the challenges of these approaches below.

2. Evaluability deals with the ex-ante analysis of whether the conditions are in place to allow a successful evaluation. In most cases evaluability includes judging: a) the clarity of intent of the subject to be evaluated [relevance and design of the expected outcome statements and results matrices]; b) the existence of sufficient measurable indicators [collection of reliable data for analysis]; c) the quality of monitoring systems; and d) external factors [positive or negative] that have influenced the process and the realization of expected outcomes.

7 THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE FAO EVALUATION FUNCTION AND EVALUATIONS

135   The Peer Review Panel assessed the independence of FAO's evaluations and evaluation systems against the following UNEG Norms. However, as a result of the differing contexts of the evaluation functions that belong to UNEG, the norms related to independence are by necessity very broad. Therefore, the Panel has, to a significant extent, benchmarked OED's independence and the systems put in place against those found in the most independent UN evaluation functions, such as UNDP and IFAD, and experience from the independent evaluation functions of the multilateral banks:

> UNEG Norm 2.1: The Governing Bodies and/ or Heads of organizations in the UN system are responsible for fostering an enabling environment for evaluation and ensuring that the role and function of evaluation are clearly stated, reflecting the principles of the UNEG Norms for Evaluation, taking into account the specificities of each organization's requirements.

> UNEG Norm 2.2: The governance structures of evaluation vary. In some cases, it rests with the Governing Bodies in others with the Head of the organization. Responsibility for evaluation should be specified in an evaluation policy.

> UNEG Norm 2.3: The Governing Bodies and/or the Heads of organizations are also responsible for ensuring that adequate resources are allocated to enable the evaluation function to operate effectively and with due independence.

> UNEG Norm 2.4: The Governing Bodies and/or Heads of organizations and of the evaluation functions are responsible for ensuring that evaluations are conducted in an impartial and independent fashion. They are also responsible for ensuring that evaluators have the freedom to conduct their work without repercussions for career development.

> UNEG Norm 5.1: Impartiality is the absence of bias in due process, methodological rigor, consideration and presentation of achievements and challenges. It also implies that the views of all stakeholders are taken into account. In the event that interested parties have different views, these are to be reflected in the evaluation analysis and reporting

> UNEG Norm 5.3: The requirement for impartiality exists at all stages of the evaluation process, including the planning of evaluation, the formulation of mandate and scope, the selection of evaluation teams, the conduct of the evaluation and the formulation of findings and recommendations.

> UNEG Norm 6.1: The evaluation function has to be located independently from the other management functions so that it is free from undue influence and that unbiased and transparent reporting is ensured. It needs to have full discretion in submitting directly its reports for consideration at the appropriate level of decision-making pertaining to the subject of evaluation.

> UNEG Norm 6.2: The Head of evaluation must have the independence to supervise and report on evaluations as well as to track follow-up of management's response resulting from evaluation.

UNEG Norm 6.3: To avoid conflict of interest and undue pressure, evaluators need to be independent, implying that members of an evaluation team must not have been directly responsible for the policy-setting, design, or overall management of the subject of evaluation, nor expect to be in the near future.

UNEG Norm 6.4: Evaluators must have no vested interest and have the full freedom to conduct impartially their evaluative work, without potential negative effects on their career development. They must be able to express their opinion in a free manner.

UNEG Norm 6.5: The independence of the evaluation function should not impinge the access that evaluators have to information on the subject of evaluation.

136   Main findings of the Peer Review Panel are summarized below.

7.1   Are the Relevant Systems and Approaches in Place?

137   Listed below are the actions included in the IPA that directly relate to establishing the independence of the OED. In all cases, these have been implemented, although not always exactly as envisaged in the IPA (see Annex IV):

- Establishment of evaluation as a separate and operationally independent office inside the Secretariat structure, reporting to the Director-General and the Council through the Programme Committee

- Evaluation budget: The evaluation regular program budget will be increased to 0.8 to 1.0 percent of the total regular program budget (over two biennia) and once decided upon by the Governing Bodies, as part of the Programme of Work and Budget approval process, allocated in full to the evaluation office.

- All contributors of extrabudgetary funds will respect the Council decision that at least 1 percent of all extrabudgetary funds should be allocated for evaluation.

- Recruitment of Evaluation Director at D2 level. A panel consisting of representatives of the Director-General and Governing Bodies, as well as evaluation specialists from other UN agencies will review the terms of reference and statement of qualifications for the post, and then participate in a panel to screen and select the appropriate candidate.

- The Director of Evaluation will serve for a fixed of four years with the possibility of renewal for a maximum of one further term, with no possibility for reappointment within FAO to another post or consultancy for at least one year.

- Approval by the Council of a comprehensive evaluation policy incorporated in a "Charter," including that all evaluation reports, management responses and follow-up reports will continue to be public documents, fully available to all FAO Members. Efforts to discuss and bring the reports to the attention of all concerned Governing Body members will also be further strengthened through consultative groups and workshops on individual evaluations

- The provisions for evaluation as approved in the Charter reflected in the basic texts.

138   In broad terms, the Charter establishes FAO's OED, along with UNDP's Evaluation Office (EO) and IFAD's Independent Office of *Evaluation* (IOE), as among the most

independent evaluation functions within the UN family. Provisions within the Charter that have established independence include the following:

a. That OED is now located independently from the other management functions, thereby making it free from undue influence and outside the line management that it is mandated to evaluate.

b. OED has two separate but direct lines of reporting: one to the Council through the Programme Committee; and a second, straight to the Director-General.

c. The evaluation teams are solely responsible for the findings and recommendations presented in the evaluation reports, subject to quality assurance by the Office of Evaluation. The Office assures adherence to the terms of reference and recognized quality standards and timeliness, and to provide information and methodological support to the evaluation.

d. OED is solely responsible for the conduct of all evaluations (with the exception of auto-evaluations), including the selection of evaluators and the terms of reference.

e. The Charter provides for the disclosure of evaluation products. All evaluation reports, management responses, and follow-up reports are to be made available to all members of the Programme Committee and are posted on the FAO evaluation website. Consultative groups and workshops are used to bring key evaluation reports to the attention of member countries.

f. The Charter identifies that the Council is the decision-making body on evaluation policy and work program. It exercises oversight over evaluation and ensures that there is transparent, professional, and independent evaluation of the organization's performance in contributing to its planned outcomes and impacts, including feedback of evaluation into planning and programming. Oversight of whether the OED is transparent, professional, and independent is exercised through this peer review process and the future mandated evaluation of evaluation in FAO, which are presented to the Programme Committee.

g. The Director of Evaluation is responsible for appointing evaluation staff and consultants, in conformity with FAO procedures.

h. The Director of Evaluation serves for a fixed term of four years with a possibility of reappointment only once for a further term of four years. The renewal of the appointment of the Director of Evaluation is subject to consultation with the Programme Committee. Likewise, the Director-General shall consult with the Programme Committee before the termination of the appointment of the Director of Evaluation. The Director of Evaluation may not be reappointed within FAO to another post or recruited as a consultant during a period of one year following the expiry or termination of the appointment.

i. The regular program budget for evaluation will attain the level of at least 0.8 percent of the total regular program budget. In consideration of the fact that the Evaluation Office also reports to the organization's governing bodies, the evaluation budget will be allocated in full to the Evaluation Office upon approval by the Council and Conference as part of the Programme of Work and Budget.

j. An allocation for evaluation is included in all extrabudgetary supported activities. Two Trust Fund pool accounts have been established to receive the

evaluation funds: one for emergency and rehabilitation projects and another for technical cooperation for development projects, including program support to normative work. The Trust Funds will be utilized to finance thematic, program, and country evaluations.

139   The Panel concludes that the functional independence of the Office is, in general, well established. The Office has an independent budget under the control of the Director of Evaluation. It has the freedom to design and conduct evaluations according to professional quality standards. The Council has oversight responsibility for evaluations to ensure that the processes for evaluating the performance of the organization are transparent, professional, and independent. Reporting lines are clearly established to the Director-General and to the Governing Council through the Programme Committee, with an internal Evaluation Committee, which advises on evaluation issues. OED has full independence to submit its evaluations directly for consideration at the appropriate level of decision making within the organization. As stated in the Charter, the Programme Committee is the direct recipient of evaluation reports for the governing bodies. The Programme Committee advises the Council on overall policies and procedures for evaluation. It approves the rolling work plan for major evaluations, reviews key evaluation reports and the management responses to the evaluations, and presents its conclusions and recommendations for follow-up action on both the evaluation and the management response to the Council in its report.

140   However, while significant progress has been made in establishing OED's functional independence, experience suggests that there are still areas where it would be wise to further clarify issues. The Panel observes that while OED is structurally independent of operational and technical line management functions, the existence of a reporting line to the Director-General and being subject to the normal FAO administrative rules and procedures (which implies accountability to the Director-General) means that the office is not entirely structurally independent. This undoubtedly increases the challenges of maintaining functional independence for the evaluation function, notwithstanding that there may be solid reasons and legal grounds for not granting full structural independence and no other UN evaluation function has greater structural independence.

141   The Panel believes that the stakeholders can learn from the example of other independent evaluation functions on how to manage these challenges and identifies a number of amendments that should be considered at the next revision of the Charter.

7.2   Issues Associated with Operationalization of the Current Systems and Approaches

Responsibility for maintaining independence

142   Currently the Director-General bears no responsibility for maintaining the functional independence of the office. While accepting the need for a reporting line to the Director-General, we note that the UNDP equivalent of the Charter includes responsibility for maintaining the independence of the UNDP Evaluation Office among the responsibilities of the Administrator. As discussed below, the Charter should be amended to include the Director-General's responsibility for maintaining independence for a number of reasons.

Appointing and reappointing the Director of OED

143   International best practice is that heads of evaluation units are appointed by the Governing Body of the organization concerned, or, if this is not possible according to human resource rules and regulations of the organization, the appointment will take place on recommendation of the Governing Body, and the recommendation is followed, unless there are nonsubstantive issues (such as security clearance or job history) that would prohibit such an appointment. On firing, international best practice is that this cannot be done by management, unless there are non-substantive issues that call for immediate dismissal (fraud and theft and other fiduciary issues that may arise). This approach can be seen in UNDP's Evaluation Policy of 2011 where "reviewing and advising on the appointment, renewal and dismissal of the Director of the Evaluation Office" (Article 18, b, ii) is included as a responsibility of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA.

144   The present FAO Charter takes a slightly different approach. The appointment itself is done by the Director-General upon recommendation of a panel that includes members of the Governing Body and representatives of other evaluation units in the UN. However, the Director-General is allowed to choose from several candidates. And on firing the Director of the Office of Evaluation, the Director-General is required to "consult" the Governing Body, but it is not clear what the consultation would mean. The Charter also states that the Director may not be reappointed within FAO to another post or recruited as a consultant during a period of one year following the end of his or her appointment. These provisions are in line with those found within the multilateral banks and the more structurally independent evaluation functions within the UN.

145   In general the Panel sees the following possibilities that could be explored in amending the Charter:

   ▪ The Charter recognizes the right of the Programme Committee/Council to recommend its preferred candidate for appointment to the position of Director.

   ▪ The Charter states that the Director's reappointment for a second term can only be refused by the Director-General if the Programme Committee/Council requests this.

   ▪ The Charter states that the Director's appointment can only be terminated before its end date if the Programme Committee/Council requests this or there are fiduciary reasons for termination.

Managing the Director of OED

146   The UNEG Norms and Standards have been written from the perspective that reporting either takes place to the Governing Body or to the head of the organization (as for example clearly stated in Standard 1.1, article 2, bullet 4: "The Head of evaluation should report directly to the Governing Body of the organization or the Head of the organization.") The Norms and Standards contain many provisions on the responsibilities of Governing Bodies and heads of organizations vis-à-vis the evaluation function of the organization, but do not provide a clear perspective when these responsibilities are shared. Discussion with the current OED Director reveals that what the provision for reporting to the Director-General means in practice is still unclear.

147　While the Charter is explicit on the independence of the head of evaluation on undertaking performance assessment of evaluation staff, the performance assessment of the Director is not directly addressed in the Charter. The Panel understands that the Performance Assessment of the Director of Evaluation is currently undertaken by the Director-General. While this is the *norm* rather than the *exception* in UN agencies, the concept of independence promoted in the multilateral financial institutions, for instance, would view the reporting relationship to the Director-General as a constraint on independence. Furthermore, as noted above, the Charter does not require the Director-General to ensure the independence of the office and thus may feel entirely justified in assessing the performance of the Director from the management perspective, rather than from the perspective of the Governing Body.

148　This review notes that this reporting relationship has, so far, not presented any major problems for the independence of the evaluation function. However, as noted above, it is not in line with international best practice and the potential for influence exists. It also potentially raises practical consequences for the Director, for example, in allowing salary raises.

149　The Panel suggests that the possibility of the Director's performance assessment either being done by the Programme Committee/Council or that they have a substantive input in the assessment being included in any future amendment of the Charter.

Ensuring independence within agreed administrative rules and procedures

150　In many UN and other international organizations, the issue of application of administrative rules and procedures is unproblematic. The evaluation function reports to either the Governing Body or the head of the organization, and whoever is reported to be also responsible for maintaining or ensuring the independence of the evaluation unit. However, in the case of FAO, the Director-General is responsible for ensuring that the Evaluation Office functions within its approved budget and work program and the agreed rules and procedures, but not for ensuring independence.[1] The Council, on the other hand, is responsible for ensuring OED's independence, but has no role in monitoring OED conformance with administrative rules and procedures. This creates a tension, in terms of maintaining independence. On the one hand, administrative rules and procedures exist for good reason and independence for an evaluation office cannot mean that the office is free from all oversight of how administrative rules and procedures are enforced. On the other hand, if this oversight is exercised by the Director-General, at the least, it can be seen as potentially circumscribing the independence of the office.

151　In the case of FAO, the practice over the past two years since the Charter came into force has been for issues where the Director of OED has thought his independence to manage evaluation processes circumscribed by an administrative decision of the Director-General to resolve the issue on an *ad hoc* basis with the Director-General. Mostly, this approach has been successful, but from an independence perspective in at least one case the Director-General's decision stood and the quality of an evaluation impacted.

152   From the Panel's perspective there are several problems with this *ad hoc* approach. First, it is not entirely transparent. Second, in the absence of a clear agreement, it is difficult for either a new Director-General or Director of OED to easily find out what has been agreed in the past. Experience from other organizations, and to some extent in FAO itself, has been that changes in leadership of an organization or independent evaluation function often leads to a period in which the understanding of what the relationship between the head of the organization and head of the independent evaluation office needs to be reestablished and expectations on both sides clarified.

153   In other organizations that have faced this challenge, among them IFAD, the GEF, and UNDP, this issue has led to specific agreements between management and the evaluation unit concerned on how administrative rules will be applied to ensure both accountability and independence. These arrangements, incorporated in the evaluation policy in the case of UNDP and in separate agreements in the case of IFAD and GEF, tend to be in line with the regular procedures of the organization, but to provide an interpretation or application of these procedures that maintains or ensures the functional independence of the evaluation unit.

154   Scope to adopt a similar approach exists within the Charter, which provides a role for the Director-General in ensuring that OED functions within "…the agreed rules and procedures." The logic would be to clarify what is meant by "agreed" in a supporting document issued by the Director-General.

155   Specific administrative agreements between organizations and their heads of evaluation units may focus on the application of the following:

- Procurement rules. The agreement may detail how waivers are granted and may ensure sufficient oversight on application of procurement ethics and general rules, while ensuring that the evaluation unit can hire the experts that are deemed necessary for the evaluation at hand.

- Human resources rules. The agreement may detail how staff (including the Director) is hired and how their performance is assessed. Currently, performance assessment is the responsibility of the Director, as it should be, but according to the Human Resources system in place the supervisor of the Director is the final authority on the performance assessments of staff of the office. The supervisor in the system is the Director-General. So far the Director-General has not exercised his right to interfere in the assessments. However, in other organizations the system has been adapted slightly to prevent any conflict of interest at the supervisor level. Options range from allowing the Director also to be the final supervisor for the assessment, to involving objective and neutral staff from Human Resources.

- Budget management rules. The agreement may lead to safeguards that the funding of an evaluation unit is separate from that of other units and will be available at the discretion of the office.

- Travel rules. The agreement safeguards the functional independence of the office on decisions on when and where to travel, within the rules and regulations of the organization regarding operational travel.

Ensuring full budgetary independence

156 An important issue with the OED's budget is that only the percentage of FAO's overall regular program budget that should be transferred to OED is decided by the Governing Bodies. In the cases of the other major sources, while the Programme Committee in 2007 endorsed the principle that an evaluation line be included in the budgets of all Technical Cooperation for Development projects, what the level of funding to be included appears to be agreed upon directly by OED and program management, and not decided by the Governing Bodies. It is also important to bear in mind that the effectiveness of the present approach for both the trust funds relies upon program staff consistently applying the principle of including a funded evaluation budget line within all voluntary funded projects. While experience to date suggests that they have done so, this is outside of the direct control of OED and the Programme Committee.

Independence in access to information and informants

157 Interviews suggest that there have been no systemic restrictions on access to information or informants that might obstruct the independence of the FAO evaluation function in conducting evaluations. However, at the individual level, instances have been encountered. This was most obviously seen in a recent evaluation in which the OED delayed implementation of the evaluation until the key interlocutor in program management had retired, as the relationship was so problematic. While this was a pragmatic approach, it affected the quality of the subsequent evaluation, as many of the key programmatic decisions were not well documented and the institutional memory lay with the person that retired.

Independence of evaluation managers and contracted evaluators

158 We have found no evidence that evaluations are not conducted in an impartial and independent fashion or that evaluators have amended what they presented based on a fear of future repercussions or because of untoward pressures from the evaluation managers.

159 Regarding the independence and impartiality of the external evaluators, the TORs have standard provisions to prevent conflicts of interest. Consultants are selected on a competitive basis, on the basis of competencies detailed in the TORs for the evaluation. A well-developed database of over 500 entries of evaluation consultants exists. When an appropriate consultant is not available, calls for an expression of interest are circulated through evaluation networks and requests are made to Programme Managers for suggestions. All consultants are interviewed and required to sign the "Declaration of Interest Relevant to Undertaking Evaluation Work for FAO." As such, OED's approach to the recruitment of consultants and ensuring their independence is in line with best practice in other evaluation units.

160 However, we are aware that OED's present approach to evaluation partly reflects a belief that in the past the evaluation managers were not independent. We have not specifically looked to gather evidence on whether or not this is still a widely held opinion and based on what evidence. We have, therefore, flagged this as one of the issues in Section 8.2 that should be examined in more depth in the evaluation of the evaluation function at FAO.

Note

1. This contrasts to UNDP where the evaluation policy holds the administrator accountable for safeguarding the functional independence of the Evaluation Office—see Evaluation Policy, 2011, Article 20 and specifically 20d. (http://web.undp.org/evaluation/policy.htm.)

8 THE PEER REVIEW PANEL'S OVERALL ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Strategic Conclusions and Recommendations

161   With regard to the role for evaluation underpinning the relevant IEE and IPA recommendations, the Panel concludes that significant progress has been made over the past two years, but as in any organization there are areas in which more needs to be done. Suggestions on how OED might approach some of the issues outlined in both these conclusions and the recommendations have been discussed in the process of the review with members of OED and are also included throughout the discussion and analysis above.

Usefulness

162   The Panel found that the systems and approaches commonly identified under the UNEG Norms for enhancing and facilitating the use of strategic evaluations are in place. We also conclude that issues related to the use of evaluation are adequately covered within the Charter. While there are areas in which application of these systems could be tweaked, we believe that these adjustments will have only a modest affect upon enhancing the overall future use of evaluations.

163   The Programme and Evaluation Committee members, who as outlined in the Charter are the major audiences for evaluations to the Governing Bodies, perceive these evaluations to be useful. We have found no significant evidence that contradicts this perception. On the other hand, the 2007 IEE review of the FAO evaluation function found that Programme Committee members and senior managers agreed that the Governing Bodies did not use the findings of evaluations in making decisions on the overall strategic direction of the organization and resource allocation—and that, in principle, they thought that they should. Our overall conclusion is that the situation today remains much the same and making more strategic use of evaluation in the future is where the greatest opportunity lies for enhancing the usefulness of evaluations to the Governing Bodies.

Recommendation 1: To the Programme Committee, Director-General, and OED
FAO should move to more strategic use of evaluations to the Governing Bodies, requiring evaluations to address strategic issues, focusing recommendations on strategic decisions, and broadening the evaluative base through a more consistent evaluation practice.

164   Moving towards more strategic evaluation and strategic use of evaluations requires both change in what the Programme Committee and the Director-General and Evaluation Committee see as the purpose of strategic evaluations and then how they are used (See paragraphs 86–90, 96–101).

165   On the part of OED, more strategic evaluation and strategic use of evaluations require a number of changes in the approach to evaluation currently used, with consideration on what strategic questions are and whether or not meeting

strategic information demands would be best met through more use of synthesis of lessons and experience across evaluations. Finally, as discussed elsewhere, it implies a lesser focus in the evaluation recommendations on telling operational management in detail how things should change.

166   The overall utility of country evaluations to date, with some exceptions, can be questioned. This probably is because these evaluations were introduced in 2006 in a context where FAO did not program at the country level, but rather at the level of the project/program, and so there were not country-level systems and frameworks within which the country evaluations could easily fit. FAO's recent rapid introduction of country programming approaches, as signified by the rollout of the country program frameworks, suggests that this former constraint will disappear. Therefore, there is now an opportunity to look again at how to significantly enhance their utility (see paragraphs 102–104).

Recommendation 2: To the Director-General and OED
OED and management should agree how country evaluations can best be used within FAO's evolving country programming approach and clarify roles and responsibilities for the management responses and follow-up reports.

167   As in many other organizations the link between RBM and evaluation is non-existent. This is one of the few areas in which something clearly stated in the Charter—namely an advisory role for OED to management on RBM—has not been acted upon. We fully agree with the rationale given for why this role was included in the IPA and then the Charter. We also think that the fact that management is actively considering how the RBM approach/systems should change in future makes this an opportune moment for OED to engage (see paragraphs 105–107).

Recommendation 3: To the Director-General and OED
The advisory role of the OED to management in the RBM system should be established as soon as possible.

Credibility

168   Credibility in the individual evaluations has been primarily reliant on evaluation practice as interpreted by the individual evaluation managers and the credibility of the contracted team leaders. This is the same as in most evaluation functions. Our conclusion is that the systems and approaches used to recruit evaluation managers accord with good practice elsewhere. Evaluations are conducted transparently, are assessed as impartial, and are conducted independently without interference from management. Stakeholder consultation takes place at various parts of the process but does not always engage all stakeholders.

169   OED's approach does diverge from comparable evaluation functions in two key aspects related to ensuring credibility. First, unlike in all other comparable evaluations, final responsibility for the contents of the OED evaluations lies with the evaluation team—in practice contracted team leader—rather than with the evaluation office. Second, to date, OED has not prioritized ensuring a common and consistent understanding and application across the team of evaluation managers of evaluation practice and standards.

170　Over the past 18 months, this has started to change. OED has started to introduce guidance to strengthen common practice by the evaluation managers and the systems identified under the relevant UNEG Norms are now being put in place. The review further found that the Charter covers the most significant issues involved in ensuring the credibility of the evaluations and the evaluation system. However, much remains to be done. Our view is that demands upon evaluation will continue to evolve over the next few years and that the changes in demands will necessitate acceleration in the changes to how credibility and quality are ensured in OED evaluations.

171　We conclude that OED should align with practice almost everywhere else and assume explicit responsibility for the contents and quality/credibility of its evaluation reports (see paragraphs 119–122).

Recommendation 4: To OED
OED should become explicitly responsible for the contents of all evaluations that it delivers.

172　This will necessitate some redefinition of the roles of the Director, evaluation managers, and team leaders. It will also require implementing quality assurance approaches and, at a minimum, ensuring that the evidence is presented to (i) show that a credible evaluation methodology has been selected, and as importantly, (ii) that it has been applied. This only needs be covered briefly in the executive summaries and other dissemination products, but full disclosure is required in the full reports.

173　As important, OED needs to be transparent in detailing the limitations in the methodology and data for addressing the evaluation questions posed.

Recommendation 5: To OED
Evaluation reports should adopt a uniform approach on presenting the methods used, the data collected and analyzed and on the scope and limitations of the evaluation, in order to provide transparency on how the evaluation gathered findings and reached conclusions.

174　This, in turn, emphasizes the need for OED, and particularly the Director, to rapidly move to complete the moves to systematize practice and understanding across the team. Common and consistent understanding and practice is required if OED is to assume real responsibility for the contents of its evaluations, especially if evaluations in future are to be more strategic. It is also important to help forestall fears that the evaluation managers may not be totally independent, as rigorous and transparent application of evaluation methodology is partly designed to make instances of bias easier to spot.

Recommendation 6: To OED
OED should rapidly move to systematize common and consistent evaluation practice and understanding across the team of evaluation managers.

175　Plans to do so may be in place, but successful implementation will be contingent on changing the internal culture within the team as a whole and managing tensions. OED also faces the familiar challenge of where to strike the balance

between delivery in the short term and investment in developing internal team capacity to enhance medium-term efficiency and effectiveness. We see signs that OED acknowledges that this is a challenge and the balance may have been in the wrong place in the past, but we reiterate that internal capacity development and team building is a necessity (see paragraph 123–133).

Independence

176 The differing contexts of the evaluation functions that belong to UNEG means that the norms related to independence are by necessity very broad. Therefore, the Panel has benchmarked OED's independence and the systems put in place against those found in the most independent UN evaluation functions, such as UNDP and IFAD, and experience from the independent evaluation functions of the multilateral banks. Our overall conclusion is that along with UNDP's Evaluation Office and IFAD's Office of Evaluation, OED is probably the most functionally and structurally independent evaluation function across the UN family. However, while significant progress has been made in establishing OED's functional independence, experience suggests that there are still areas where it would be wise to further formally clarify issues.

Recommendation 7: To the Programme Committee
The Charter should be amended to clarify a number of issues required to ensure OED's functional independence.

177 We would suggest that this be done expediently and certainly before recruitment of the next OED Director. The following possibilities that could be explored in amending the Charter:

- Responsibility for maintenance of the OED's functional independence should be included in the roles and responsibilities of the FAO Director-General (see paragraph 142).

- The role of the Programme Committee in the recruitment, reappointment, and possible dismissal of the OED Director should be clarified. Possibilities that should be considered would include the following (see paragraphs 143–145):

  — The Charter recognizes the right of the Programme Committee/Council to recommend its preferred candidate for appointment to the position of Director.

  — The Charter states that the Director's reappointment for a second term can only be refused by the Director-General, if the Programme Committee/Council requests this.

  — The Charter states that the Director's appointment can only be terminated before the end date, if the Programme Committee/Council requests this or there are fiduciary reasons for termination.

- The Panel suggests that the possibility of the Programme Committee/Council doing the Director's performance assessment or that the Programme Committee/Council having a substantive input in the assessment be included in any future amendment of the Charter (see paragraphs 146–149).

- The present schedule of a review every two years and a full evaluation in the sixth year is probably not a cost-effective schedule, mainly because things change relatively slowly. We would suggest that an evaluation be scheduled for late 2015 or early 2016, which would allow time for changes suggested here to bear results and fit with development of the next strategic plan in 2017. The next review should then take place three years later.

Recommendation 8: To the Programme Committee
The Charter should be amended to allow an evaluation of evaluation in FAO in late 2015 or early 2016, to allow time for changes suggested here to bear results and also fit with development of the next strategic plan in 2017. Alternate peer reviews and evaluations should then be scheduled every three years.

178   The Panel observes that while OED is structurally independent of operational and technical line management functions, the existence of a reporting line to the Director-General and being subject to the normal FAO administrative rules and procedures (which implies accountability to the Director-General) means that the office is not entirely structurally independent. Notwithstanding that there may be solid reasons and legal grounds for not granting full structural independence, and no other UN evaluation function has greater structural independence, this undoubtedly increases the challenges of maintaining the functional independence for the evaluation function.

179   From the panel's perspective the present *ad hoc* approach to resolving issues where the Director of OED has thought his independence to manage evaluation processes circumscribed by an administrative decision of the Director-General is problematic. In other organizations, this issue has led to specific agreements between management and the evaluation unit concerned with how administrative rules will be applied to ensure both accountability and independence. Scope to adopt a similar approach exists within the Charter, which provides a role for the Director-General in ensuring that OED functions within "…the agreed rules and procedures."

Recommendation 9: To the Director-General and OED
The Director-General and OED should draft an agreement between management and OED identifying how administrative rules on procurement, human resources, budget management, and travel will be applied to ensure both the accountability and independence of OED.

180   The logic would be to clarify what is meant by "agreed" in a supporting document issued by the Director-General. Specific administrative agreements between organizations and their heads of evaluation units may focus on the application of the following (see paragraphs 150–154):

- Procurement rules. The agreement may detail how waivers are granted and may ensure sufficient oversight on application of procurement ethics and general rules, while ensuring that the evaluation unit can hire the experts that are deemed necessary for the evaluation at hand.

- Human resources rules. The agreement may detail how staff (including the Director) is hired and how their performance is assessed. Currently, performance assessment is the Director's responsibility, as it should be, but according

to the Human Resources system in place the supervisor of the Director is the final authority on the performance assessments of staff of the office. The supervisor in the system is the Director-General. So far the Director-General has not exercised his right to interfere in the assessments. However, in other organizations the system has been adapted slightly to prevent any conflict of interest at the supervisor level. Options range from allowing the Director also to be the final supervisor for the assessment, to involving objective and neutral staff from Human Resources.

- Budget management rules. The agreement may lead to safeguards that the funding of an evaluation unit is separate from that of other units and will be available at the discretion of the office.

- Travel rules. The agreement safeguards the functional independence of the office on decisions on when and where to travel, within the rules and regulations of the organization regarding operational travel.

181 Impartiality is closely related to independence and we find no evidence that the evaluations are not, in the main, impartial. We conclude that the evaluations are impartial mainly because of the efforts of OED to ensure that it recruits team leaders who are independent and have not been involved with the work under evaluation. However, we would note that scope still remains to ensure that evidence of impartiality is more clearly presented in the evaluation reports, by ensuring that the linkage between evidence and findings and the conclusions is more clearly made and, where appropriate, ensuring that alternative views on the conclusions to be drawn from the evidence presented are included in the evaluation reports.

8.2 Additional Issues That Might be Covered in the Future Evaluation of Evaluation at FAO

182 For the full evaluation of the evaluation function in FAO there are a number of questions that would need to be examined in more depth than is possible in this review.

Roles and responsibilities

183 In this review, the Panel have primarily focused on the functioning of OED. How the other parties identified in the Charter—the Council, Programme Committee, Director-General, and Evaluation Committee—have fulfilled their roles or what they might do differently to enhance the value of evaluation in meeting the needs of both the Council and FAO management has not been examined in any depth. An evaluation looking at the added value of evaluation to the organization should, therefore, examine the roles of all key parties in ensuring that evaluation adds value.

Evaluation as a component of RBM

184 Evaluation at the organizational level is one component of the overall RBM system. As with any system, to fully understand the functioning and effectiveness of any one component, it is necessary to examine operation of the system as a whole and how the various components interact. The evaluation should, therefore, examine how evaluation fits into the overall RBM system and the degree to which the effectiveness of both evaluation and the whole RBM system might be enhanced through changes in the approach to evaluation at FAO.

The implications of decentralization

185   Given the rapid decentralization happening within FAO, the evaluation should assess how this has impacted, and will impact, on evaluation responsibilities as currently identified in the Charter.

Evaluation for learning

186   A major purpose of evaluation at FAO is learning. The degree to which evaluation can fulfill this role is ultimately dependent upon whether there is a culture of learning within the overall organization and whether there are incentives for staff and managers to learn from evaluation. The IEE concluded that knowledge management is a challenge within FAO, and therefore any evaluation of evaluation's utility should examine how it has been integrated into the wider processes aimed at enhancing knowledge management in the organization as a whole. In particular, the usefulness of the evaluations to middle managers and subject matter specialists within the organization and to the other key stakeholders at country level should be examined, which would include a detailed examination of the consultation processes used within the evaluations and whether these processes are adequate.

Evaluation for accountability

187   The Programme Committee has already identified the following question as an issue: The extent to which evaluation recommendations are actually implemented and whether what was implemented addressed the challenges identified by the findings and conclusions of the evaluations.

188   The adequacy of coverage of evaluations for the Governing Bodies and country evaluations should be examined in more detail and linked with a greater examination of how to meet demands from both the Programme Committee and senior management.

Quality and credibility

189   The credibility and usefulness of project evaluations, which still comprise a significant strand of work, should be reviewed in depth.

190   OED's internal quality assurance approaches are only now being put in place and, therefore, whether they have developed to enhance the credibility and utility of evaluations would need to be examined. This would need to be linked with a more structured assessment of the quality of a significant proportion of the three types of evaluation—to the Governing Bodies, country level, and project level. It is also possible that this should be extended to any future syntheses, if these become more used.

Behavioral and functional independence of OED

191   OED's present approach to evaluation partly reflects a belief that in the past the evaluation managers were not independent. We have not specifically looked to gather evidence on whether or not this is still a widely held opinion and whether it is based on convincing evidence. However, given the recommendations of this review, examination of the independence of the evaluation managers is necessary.

192   The future role of the evaluation trust funds as growing sources of OED funding should be reassessed.

ANNEX A
TERMS OF REFERENCE

Professional Peer Review of the Evaluation Function of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the UN

Terms of Reference

November 1, 2011

Introduction

The Professional Peer Review is conducted in line with the *UNEG Framework for Professional Peer Reviews of Evaluation Function of UN Organizations*, which was approved by the Annual General Meeting of the UN Evaluation Group in 2011. This Peer Review is requested by FAO in line with its Charter for the FAO Office of Evaluation, which requires a biennial review of "conformity of evaluation work to best practice and standards."[1] The Peer Review report will be presented to the Director-General and the Council, together with the recommendations of the Programme Committee.[2]

This document sets out the key elements of the Peer Review of the evaluation function of FAO. It describes the background of the Peer Review, its purpose, the scope, the general approach, the methods, the composition of the Peer Panel, and the time schedule. This document, approved by the panel members and shared with FAO's Office of Evaluation and FAO Management, serves as a basic reference guide for the Review.

Background

The Independent External Evaluation of the FAO led to a process of reform that included a strengthened role and greater independence of the Office of Evaluation. In January 2010, the evaluation function was separated from the Division of Programming and Budget under which it had been administratively located to become the Office of Evaluation, with the position of the head of the office upgraded to Director level. A Charter for the FAO Office of Evaluation, providing the policy framework for the evaluation function in FAO, was approved by the Council in May 2010 and incorporated in the Basic Texts of the Organization. This Charter describes the new organizational structure in which the Office operates. It also confirms that the Office will adhere to the norms and standards of established by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG). The primary principles underpinning evaluation in FAO are independence, impartiality, credibility, transparency, and usefulness.

For FAO, the legislative basis for this Peer Review is section VI of the Charter on Quality Assurance. This section describes the different components of the quality assurance system, including the following: 1) peer review of major evaluation reports; 2) biennial review by a small group of independent peers for conformity of evaluation work to best practice and standards (that is, the present exercise); and 3) independent evaluation of the evaluation function every six years. Both the biennial review and the independent evaluation of the evaluation function will result in reports to the Director-General and the Council, together with the recommendations of the Programme Committee.

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[1] Charter for the FAO Office of Evaluation, VI. paragraph 30.
[2] Ibidem, paragraph 31.

UNEG has adopted a framework for the peer reviews—the most recent version of this framework was approved at the Annual General Meeting of UNEG in April 2011. This framework puts the focus on three of the five principles: independence, credibility, and usefulness of the evaluation function; but it is sufficiently flexible to ensure that the two other principles receive sufficient attention.

In the period of April 2011 to July 2011, the Panel of professional evaluators was assembled in interaction with the UNEG/DAC Joint Task Force on External Peer Review as well as with the FAO Office of Evaluation.

Purpose of the Professional Peer Review

In FAO, the peer review is placed within ongoing process of improvement of its evaluation function. This Professional Peer Review will contribute to that process through an independent assessment of the independence, credibility and utility of FAO's evaluation function, focusing on the functioning of Office of Evaluation and the quality and use of its work. It will provide recommendations to the Director-General, the Governing Bodies and the Office of Evaluation aimed at improving the quality of FAO's evaluation regime and to inform further discussions and decisions about the functional and administrative independence of FAO's Office of Evaluation.

The findings of the Professional Peer Review will be presented to the Programming Committee of the FAO Council, scheduled for October 2012. The Peer Review will also be presented to the UNEG members, as well as the DAC Evaluation Network, as feedback on the quality of evaluation in one of the multilateral organizations. In addition to presenting its report, the Panel will also provide feedback on the peer review process to the joint DAC-UNEG task force on peer reviews to contribute to the further development of this instrument.

Approach

In conducting its work, the Panel will emphasize the peer exchange in order to enrich its independent assessment and to promote learning through discussions on ways to meet common challenges related to evaluation practice. The Panel will seek ways to engage on professional and technical issues to provide insight in international benchmarks and to understand the challenges that FAO is facing in its evaluation practices.

Subject, Scope of, and Limitations to the Professional Peer Review

The Professional Peers will review the evaluation function of the FAO in light of the objectives and structure of the FAO, according to the core assessment criteria summarized below, which are further explained in the normative framework in Annex A.

The Professional Peer Review will examine and comment on:

1. The evaluation policy of the FAO as embodied in the Charter of the FAO Office of Evaluation and other policies and procedures having a bearing on the Office of Evaluation and its work, in particular the extent to which the evaluation policy conforms with international standards, and whether other policies are relevant to the functioning of the Office of Evaluation (for example, those concerning results-based management, harmonization and alignment, strategic planning, budgeting, and evaluation coverage).

2. Structural aspects of how the evaluation function operates in the FAO, including whether the current functional arrangements are effective in ensuring that the Office of Evaluation can contribute to the learning and accountability within the FAO.

3. The internal organization of the FAO Office of Evaluation.

4. The nature of relations of the Office of Evaluation with the various organizational units in FAO, as well as FAO's representations in member countries.

5. Organizational relationships of the Office of Evaluation with Management and the Governing Body of the FAO.

6. The quality of the evaluations undertaken under the auspices of the Office of Evaluation. This includes the planning process, the conduct of the evaluations, the quality of the evaluation reports, the independence of evaluation teams and team leaders, and the ways in which the Office enables them to produce credible reports, including the ways stakeholders are facilitated to comment on draft reports.

7. Quality and use of evaluation results and follow-up. Important aspects are the following: the actual impact of the evaluations; the ways in which evaluation results are disseminated and lessons used both within the FAO and by others (such as member countries, donors, and cooperating partners); the responsibility for the follow-up of recommendations; and how follow-up is undertaken and monitored. How well does the management implement decisions based on evaluation recommendations?

8. Other actions undertaken by FAO's Office of Evaluation such as networking, conferences, and the website.

9. Adequacy of resources for evaluation, including observations about of the two Trust Funds (Emergency Trust Fund and Development Trust Fund) linked to voluntary-funded resources of the Organization.

10. Adequacy of the quality assurance system, including periodicity of reviews of the evaluation function.

By necessity, the assessment of the evaluation function is limited in scope. A professional peer review is not a full-fledged evaluation that can comprehensively and systematically evaluate practices, processes, and outcomes. The Panel will report on the limitations of its work.

Core Assessment Criteria

In line with the *Framework for Professional Peer Reviews of Evaluation Functions in Multilateral Organizations*, the Peer Review of the Evaluation function of FAO will apply three core criteria that need to be satisfied for evaluation functions and products to be considered of high quality:

A. **Independence of evaluations and the evaluation system(s).** The evaluation process should be impartial and independent in its function from the process concerned with the policy making, the delivery, and the management of assistance. A requisite measure of independence of the evaluation function is a recognized precondition for credibility, validity, and usefulness. At the same time, the review should bear in mind that the appropriate guarantees of the necessary independence of the FAO Office of Evaluation is defined according to the nature of its work, its governance and decision-making arrangements, and other factors. Moreover, as with most organizations, the Office's aim is to encourage the active application and use of evaluations at all levels of management, meaning that systemic measures for ensuring the necessary objectivity and impartiality of this work should receive due attention.

B. **Credibility of evaluations.** The credibility of evaluation depends on the expertise and independence of the evaluators and the degree of transparency of the evaluation process. Credibility requires that evaluations should report successes, as well as failures. Recipient countries should, as a rule, fully participate in evaluation in order to promote credibility and commitment. Whether and how the organization's approach to evaluation fosters partnership and helps builds ownership merits attention as a major theme.

C. **Utility of evaluations.** To have an impact on decision making, evaluation findings must be perceived as relevant and useful and be presented in a clear and concise way. They should fully reflect the different interests and needs of the many parties involved in development cooperation. Importantly, each review should bear in mind that ensuring the utility of evaluations is only partly under the control of evaluators. It is also critically a function of the interest of managers and member countries through their participation on governing bodies, in commissioning, receiving, and using evaluations.

D. The core criteria of **impartiality** and **transparency** will be included in the further deliberation of the three criteria that are in the core of the peer review process, as they are strongly related to them. Impartiality is enabled by independence and is a fundamental element of the credibility of evaluations. Transparency is another fundamental element of credibility and is an important basis for the utility of evaluations.

These core criteria are further elaborated in the Normative Framework elaborated in the Annex A.

Normative Framework

FAO's Office of Evaluation is a member of UNEG, composed of 43 evaluation functions of the UN System. When assessing FAO's evaluation function, the Peer Review Panel will use the normative framework presented in Annex A, which is based on the normative frameworks of previous peer reviews. Furthermore, recent lessons will be taken into account from the peer review of IFAD's evaluation function, which was undertaken by the Evaluation Cooperation Group (ECG) of the international financial institutions, as well as bilateral evaluation function reviews, discussed in the DAC Evaluation Network.

To assess the quality of evaluation reports, the Peer Review will use a quality assessment tool based on best international practice, as exemplified by quality criteria of UNEG, the DAC, and the ECG.

Panel Composition

A number of important considerations were taken into account when composing the Panel membership: (i) relevant professional experience; (ii) independence—to avoid any potential or alleged conflict of interest or partiality, the Panel members do not have any close working relationship to FAO that might influence the Panel's position and deliberations; and (iii) independent multilateral and bilateral members, as well as experiences from the South and transition countries.

The combination of these criteria together with the voluntary nature of serving on the Panel resulted in the following composition:

- Doha Abdelhamid, independent senior consultant and professor of finance and policy evaluation, Cairo, Egypt

- Henri Jorritsma, vice-chair of the DAC Evaluation Network and Deputy Director of the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Hague, the Netherlands

- Segbedzi Norgbey, Chief of Evaluation of the UN Environment Programme, Nairobi, Kenya

- Rob D. van den Berg, Director of Evaluation of the Global Environment Facility in Washington, DC, United States (Chair of the Panel)

The Panel will be assisted by an advisor responsible for data collection and information gathering; preliminary assessment of the collected information, which is to form the basis for more detailed information gathering through structured and semistructured

interviews. This preliminary assessment will start from the perspective offered in the self-assessment that FAO's Office of Evaluation will undertake. With the benefit of the information assembled by the advisor, its examination by the members of the Peer Panel, and observations provided by FAO on the information gathered, the Peer Panel will conduct interviews with FAO (Staff of the Office of Evaluation, Senior Staff in FAO, including Staff in Technical Departments, and a selection of Programme Committee Members).

The final peer review visit, tentatively planned in April 2012, will focus on a professional exchange of perspectives between the Panel and the FAO Office of Evaluation, leading to recommendations for improving or maintaining the independence, impartiality, transparency, credibility, and usefulness of the evaluation function of FAO. Furthermore, preliminary findings of the Panel will also be discussed with representatives of FAO management, as well as representatives of the Programme Committee, to ensure that their perspectives are also taken into account. The final report of the Peer Review will be made available to FAO in the months after the peer review exchange.

Reporting

The Peer Panel will submit its report to the Director-General and to the Programme Committee through the FAO Office of Evaluation and the Evaluation Committee (Internal) of FAO. The Panel will make the draft final report available to the same parties for comments on factual errors and errors of analysis.

The final report will also be provided to the joint DAC-UNEG Task Force, for dissemination among its respective constituencies and to interested cooperating partners. The Peer Panel will report on the Review's progress to FAO's Office of Evaluation and the joint DAC-UNEG Task Force.

Responsibility of FAO's Office of Evaluation

FAO's Office of Evaluation serves as the main contact point within FAO for the Panel and its advisors. The Office will ensure that a proper budget is set aside to cover those components of the peer review not funded by the peer review participants.

The Office will provide requested information and data, including the following:

- Names and details of contact persons whom the Panel or its advisors wish to contact
- Complete list of the Office's evaluations
- List of whom to meet in the FAO Management and in the Council
- E-library of evaluation products accessible via Internet

The Office will provide the Panel with a self-assessment prior to the start of the Peer Review.

The Office will brief the FAO and its governing Council about the Peer Review. The Office will also be instrumental in submitting the Panel's report and recommendations to the Director-General and to the Council and for reporting on follow-up action.

Feedback

The Peer Review Panel and FAO's Office of Evaluation will provide the DAC-UNEG Task Force with feedback on the experience of the Peer Review to enable the members of UNEG, as well as DAC Evalnet and ECG, to learn from FAO's experience.

Documents to be consulted (not exhaustive)

- Charter of the FAO Office of Evaluation

- Policy and funding arrangements for the Evaluation of Emergency and rehabilitation work of the organization

- Field program circular for the evaluation provisions in technical cooperation for development projects funded by voluntary contributors

- Programme Evaluation Reports (2009; 2011)

- Thematic and program evaluation reports

- Major evaluation reports of emergency and rehabilitation operations

- Country level evaluation reports

- Project level evaluation reports

- Guidelines, templates, and other evaluation tools as published by the Office or FAO

- Other relevant FAO documents, for example, concerning RBM, monitoring, operational procedures, or risk management

Persons to meet (by advisors and/or Peer Panel Members)

- FAO Office of Evaluation Director and Staff

- The Director-General or his representative and senior staff in FAO

- FAO Staff dealing with results-based management, knowledge systems, program appraisal, management response on evaluations, good practices and portfolio quality improvement;

- Members of the FAO Programme Committee

- Former evaluation team leaders

- Staff members of a selected number of FAO units, including technical departments

- The possibility to interview staff members in regional, subregional, and country offices through teleconferencing or Skype may be explored

Review Process and Schedule

1. Initial meeting of the Peer Panel to discuss the approach of the FAO Peer Review.	Teleconference in August 2011
2. Potential second meeting of the Peer Panel to agree on the ToR, on the Normative Framework, and on the ToR for the Advisor to the Peer Panel.	End of September 2011
3. Recruitment of Advisor to the Peer Panel.	Completed early October 2011
4. Self-assessment undertaken by the FAO Office of Evaluation.	Completed early December 2011
5. Preliminary desk review of Advisor.	Up to first peer review visit
6. First visit of Peer Review Panel and Advisor to Rome to meet with FAO Office of Evaluation and representatives of Management and Council.	January 16–18, 2012
7. Desk review continued and interviews through teleconferencing, Skype, and other means.	February–March 2012
8. Final Peer Review Panel and Advisor visit to Rome for peer review exchange and presentation of preliminary findings.	April 19–24, 2012
9. Draft report for comments on factual errors and errors of analysis.	End of May 2012
10. Possible third visit of (representatives of) the Panel to Rome to discuss comments.	June 2012
11. Final version of the peer review report.	End of June 2012
12. Management response to the peer review report.	July 2012
13. Presentation of the peer review report and the management response to the Programme Committee.	October 2012

Resources

The budget for the Peer Review will be covered as follows:

- The participation of the Panel members of GEF, UNEP, and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs will be covered by their own organizations.

- The participation of Mrs. Abdelhamid will be covered by the peer review budget.

- The costs of hiring the Advisor will be covered by the peer review budget.

- Any additional costs in FAO (including in-kind contributions of staff time) will be covered by FAO's Office of Evaluation.

The peer review budget will be funded through contributions from FAO's Office of Evaluation and of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

ANNEX B
LIST OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED
BY THE PANEL

Tullia Aiazzi, Senior Evaluation Officer, OED, FAO
Abdul Ayazi, FAO Programme Committee, Government of Afghanistan
Lori Bell, Evaluation Officer, OED, FAO
Luisa Belli, Assistant Evaluation Manager, OED, FAO
Ashwin Bhouraskar, Evaluation Officer, OED, FAO
Genny Bonomi, Evaluation Analyst, OED, FAO
Younes Bouarfa, Consultant Team Leader
Marta Bruno, Knowledge Management Officer, OED, FAO
Bernd Bultemeier, Evaluation Officer, OED, FAO
Aude Carro, Evaluation Analyst, OED, FAO
Vito Cistulli, Senior Agric. Policy Support Officer, TCSP, FAO
Carlotta De Vivanco, Evaluation Analyst, OED, FAO
Luc Dubreuil, Senior Evaluation Officer, OED, FAO
Maria Theresa Ferreros, External Auditor
Matthew Fisher-Post, Intern, OED, FAO
Hafez Ghanem, Assistant Director-General, Economic and Social Development, FAO
Prya Gujadhur, Evaluation Analyst, OED, FAO
Boyd Haight, Director, Office of Strategy, Planning and Resources Management, FAO
Changcui He, Senior Special Adviser/Acting Directeur de Cabinet, FAO
Manoj Juneja, Deputy Director-General/Operations, FAO
Daud Khan, Principal Officer, OSD, FAO
Aurelie Larmoyer, Evaluation Officer, OED, FAO
Enrique Lora, Evaluation Officer, OED, FAO
Mukharram Maksudova, Evaluation Analyst, OED, FAO
Nadine Monnichon, Evaluation Clerk, OED, FAO
Robert Moore, Director, OED, FAO
Brenna Moore, Evaluation Analyst, OED, FAO
Cecilia Nordin Van Gansberghe, Chairperson, FAO Programme Committee, Government
    of Sweden
Jennifer Nyberg, Office of the Deputy Director-General (Knowledge), FAO
Martin Pinero, Senior Adviser (Consultant), FAO
Marta Piccarozzi, Evaluation Analyst, OED, FAO
Sarah Jaff, Evaluation Clerk, OED, FAO
Rachel Sauvinet-Bedouin, Senior Evaluation Officer, OED, FAO
Mariahelena Semedo, ADG/Regional Representative, Office of the Regional Representa-
    tive, FAO
Daniel Shallon, Evaluation Officer, OED, FAO
Carlos Tarazona, Evaluation Officer (seconded by FAO-OED), IAEA
Antonio Tavares, Legal Counsel, Office of the Legal Counsel, FAO
Savina Tessitore, Evaluation Analyst, OED, FAO
Laurent Thomas, Assistant Director-General, Technical Cooperation Department, FAO
Modibo Traore, Assistant Director-General, Agriculture and Consumer Protection, FAO
Ann Tutwiler, Deputy Director-General/Knowledge, FAO
Marco Valicenti, FAO Programme Committee, Government of Canada
Martine Van Dooren, FAO Programme Committee, Government of Belgium
Gavin Wall, Director, AGS, FAO
Heather Young-Canini, Evaluation Assistant, OED, FAO

ANNEX C
NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK

Assessment Criteria and Description	UNEG Norms & Standards (reference)	Documented Evidence		
		Normative Framework of the FAO Evaluation Function (Summarize documented policy and source document)	Verifiable Practice (Summarize documented practice and source document)	Perceived Policy and Practice (Summarize feedback from interviews)
Independence	N.6			
Structural Independence				
Where is the FAO Evaluation Function (and Office of Evaluation) located with respect to FAO Management and Governing Body?	N.6.1			
To whom does the Director of FAO Office of Evaluation report?	N.6.1 N.7.1			
Who is finally responsible for ensuring the independence of the FAO evaluation function?	N.2.1			
Institutional Independence				
Programming				
Who decides the FAO evaluation work program (including the selection of subjects for evaluation)?	N.2.6			
To what extent do the Organization's Strategic Objectives, described in the FAO Results Frameworks (i.e., pp. 97-177 in document C 2011/3 - Medium-Term Plan 2010-13 (Revised) and Programme of Work and Budget 2012-13) drive the evaluation program?				
Does the Charter of the FAO Evaluation Function provide a clear explanation of the concept, institutional framework, roles/responsibilities, and use of the evaluation function within FAO?	N.3.1			
Does the Charter of the FAO Evaluation Function conform to international standards?	N.3.1			
Can FAO managers' influence the decision on what to evaluate?				
How is the FAO Office of Evaluation organized and staffed?	N.2.3			

Assessment Criteria and Description	UNEG Norms & Standards (reference)	Documented Evidence		Perceived Policy and Practice (Summarize feedback from interviews)
		Normative Framework of the FAO Evaluation Function (Summarize documented policy and source document)	Verifiable Practice (Summarize documented practice and source document)	
What does FAO management consider to be adequate in terms of evaluation coverage of its activities? Is FAO Office of Evaluation staff quantitatively and qualitatively sufficient to ensure the evaluation coverage that is considered adequate by FAO (either in terms of percentage of total funding or number of evaluations)?				
What percentage of funding is allocated to regular FAO Office of Evaluation staff and what percentage to evaluation budgets?				
Who decides on the budget for evaluation and is the decision taken on the basis of an evaluation program?				
What is the basis for the FAO evaluation budget (is it in function of FAO evaluation programming or does the funding available drive what will be evaluated)?	N.2.3			
Are FAO Office of Evaluation financial resources sufficient to ensure the targeted evaluation coverage?				
How are the two trust funds (Emergency TF and Development TF) linked to the voluntary-funded resources of FAO?				
Is the emergency funding adequate to report on emergency operations?[a]				
Implementation				
Who is responsible for preparing ToRs and/or approach papers for evaluations?				
Who is responsible for selecting evaluation consultants?				

Assessment Criteria and Description	UNEG Norms & Standards (reference)	Documented Evidence		Perceived Policy and Practice (Summarize feedback from interviews)
		Normative Framework of the FAO Evaluation Function (Summarize documented policy and source document)	Verifiable Practice (Summarize documented practice and source document)	
Who bears the final responsibility for the evaluation reports (i.e., is it the responsibility of the evaluation teams through their team leader or is it the responsibility of the FAO Office of Evaluation)?				
To whom are final evaluation reports submitted?				
How are comments on evaluation reports dealt with? Is there scope for exercising influence and, if so, of what nature?				
Behavioral Independence and Integrity				
How and by whom is behavioral independence and integrity safeguarded?				
Are there provisions within the FAO Office of Evaluation to prevent or manage conflicts of interest?	N.6.3 N.6.4 N.11			
How is the FAO Office of Evaluation staff selected?				
Is the FAO Office of Evaluation included or excluded from a FAO-wide staff policy?	N.2.4			
Do FAO Office of Evaluation staffs take professional/career risks by acting independently and with integrity, if they chose to move to other positions within FAO?				
Credibility				
Impartiality	N.5			
Are the criteria for selection of subjects of evaluation set in a way that ensures an impartial choice?	N.5.3			

Assessment Criteria and Description	UNEG Norms & Standards (reference)	Documented Evidence		Perceived Policy and Practice (Summarize feedback from interviews)
		Normative Framework of the FAO Evaluation Function (Summarize documented policy and source document)	Verifiable Practice (Summarize documented practice and source document)	
Is a system in place to ensure conflict of interest is avoided in the identification and selection of consultants?	N.5.3			
Quality	N.8			
Quality aspects related to methodology				
How does the FAO Office of Evaluation ensure/ enable the quality of evaluations in the design, methodology, implementation, and reporting?	N.8.1			
Do evaluation Terms of Reference/approach papers spell out the evaluation methodology to be used, and if so does it ensure impartiality (for example, approach to selecting case studies or site visits)?	N.8.1			
Quality aspects related to the evaluation office staff and consultants				
Are there provisions that ensure evaluation staff has the right technical competencies?	N.9			
Is a system in place to ensure the professional competence on the evaluation team that is necessary for arriving at accurate and credible evaluation reports?	N.2.5			
Is the UNEG code of conduct for evaluators applied and enforced?				
Is there a pool of consultants that are used time and again or is the consultant selection process open?				
Is there a quality assurance system that includes institutionalized periodic reviews of the FAO Evaluation Function?				
Internal quality assurance mechanisms				

Assessment Criteria and Description	UNEG Norms & Standards (reference)	Documented Evidence		Perceived Policy and Practice (Summarize feedback from interviews)
		Normative Framework of the FAO Evaluation Function (Summarize documented policy and source document)	Verifiable Practice (Summarize documented practice and source document)	
Is there a quality assurance system for evaluations? If yes, what does the quality assurance system entail and how reliable is it for ensuring the credibility of evaluations?				
Who is responsible for quality assurance, especially of the technical content of evaluations?				
Transparency	N.10			
Is a system in place to ensure that the evaluation process is clear and transparent to stakeholders?	N.10.1			
Is a system in place to ensure stakeholder views are considered in the process of finalizing evaluation reports and how are dissenting views handled?				
What processes, if any, are applied to ensure full participation of recipient countries' stakeholders in evaluation, while maintaining independence and credibility?				
Are evaluation Terms of Reference shared with stakeholders once finalized?	N.10.2			
Is a system in place to ensure transparency in the reporting of evaluation findings and how comments are dealt with?	N.10.2			
Does the FAO Office of Evaluation network with professional evaluation associations (through conferences, workshops, or website)?				
Usefulness				
Intentionality	N.4			
Is the purpose that evaluation fulfills for FAO clear at board, senior management, and operational levels (including FAO offices in the field)?	N.1.1 N.1.3			

Assessment Criteria and Description	UNEG Norms & Standards (reference)	Documented Evidence		Perceived Policy and Practice (Summarize feedback from interviews)
		Normative Framework of the FAO Evaluation Function (Summarize documented policy and source document)	Verifiable Practice (Summarize documented practice and source document)	
Is the FAO Evaluation Function linked to the FAO results-based management system, if so in which way?	N.1.1 N.1.3 N.2.6			
How are evaluation recommendations used at the various FAO management levels?	N.1.1 N.1.3 N.2.6			
Is the selected sample of evaluation subjects representative enough to enable comparative analysis and drawing lessons across the FAO portfolio?	N.1.3 N.1.5 N.2.6 N.4.2			
Are recommendations concrete and action-oriented?	N.8.2 N.10.2 N.13.2			
Is there a management response system that ensures formal, corporate, substantive, and timely management responses are given to evaluation recommendations?	N.12			
Is there a management response system that ensures that follow-up actions are taken, recorded/tracked, and reported on?	N.12			
What percentage of evaluation recommendations are accepted or rejected by FAO management during the last three cycles/years?				
Is the FAO Office of Evaluation work program made public?	N.4.1			
Is the opinion of key stakeholders sought on the utility of completed evaluations?				
Timeliness	N.4.1			
Is a system in place to ensure that the evaluations are conducted in a timely manner (distinguishing between project, program, and policy evaluation)?				

Assessment Criteria and Description	UNEG Norms & Standards (reference)	Documented Evidence		Perceived Policy and Practice (Summarize feedback from interviews)
		Normative Framework of the FAO Evaluation Function (Summarize documented policy and source document)	Verifiable Practice (Summarize documented practice and source document)	
Is a system in place to ensure that the evaluation reports are shared with stakeholders in a timely manner?				
Is a system in place to ensure a sound balance between quality and timing of the evaluation?				
Is a system in place to ensure that the evaluation design and methodology considers milestones when evaluation information is needed and can be fed back into decision-making processes?				
Accessibility				
What is the disclosure policy and practice of FAO?				
Are evaluation reports easily accessible, for example, through a searchable website?	N.2.7 N.13.2			
Do evaluation reports present in a clear, complete, concise, and balanced way evidence, findings, and conclusions?	N.8.2 N.10.2 N.13.2			
How is evaluation knowledge shared? How does it contribute to FAO knowledge management system?	N.13.1			
Does the agency have an active policy/practice of disseminating evaluation findings and reports?	N.2.7 N.13.2			

a. The Development TF having just been established, it is too early to ask the same question on the adequacy of the Emergency TF.

ANNEX D
PRESENT STATUS OF ACTIONS TO STRENGTHEN EVALUATION IDENTIFIED IN THE IMMEDIATE PLAN OF ACTION

Action Identified	Action Taken	Present Status
Establishment of evaluation as a separate and operationally independent office inside the Secretariat structure, reporting to the Director-General and the Council through the Programme Committee.	In January 2010, the evaluation function was separated from the Division of Programming and Budget under which it had been administratively located to become the Office of Evaluation, with the position of the head of the office upgraded to Director level. Under Charter for the FAO Office of Evaluation, approved by the Council in May 2010, Director has twin reporting lines. First to the Director-General and second the Council through the Programme Committee.	Done
Evaluation budget: The evaluation Regular Programme Budget will be increased to 0.8-1.0 percent of the total Regular Programme Budget (over two biennia) and once decided upon by the Governing Bodies, as part of the Programme of Work and Budget approval process, allocated in full to the evaluation office.	The Charter states that at least 0.8 percent of the total Regular Programme Budget should be allocated to the Office of Evaluation and that the budget is allocated in full to the Evaluation Office upon approval by the Council and Conference as part of FAO's overall Programme of Work and Budget. The current intention is that the 0.8 percent of the total Regular Programme Budget will be reached in the 2014-15 biennium budget.	Done
All contributors of extrabudgetary funds will respect the Council decision that at least 1 percent of all extrabudgetary funds should be allocated for evaluation.	The two trust evaluation funds now established mean that the system is now in place for funding evaluation across the major sources of extrabudgetary funding. However, rules for allocation of funding for evaluation within individual evaluation budgets does not strictly follow the at least 1 percent rule, although de facto, approach adopted will mean that budget allocation will be around 1 percent. Note that while Emergency Evaluation Trust Fund established in 2007, Technical Cooperation for Development Evaluation Trust Fund only established in 2011.	Done
Recruitment of Evaluation Director at D2 level. A panel consisting of representatives of the Director-General and Governing Bodies, as well as evaluation specialists from other UN agencies, will review the terms of reference and statement of qualifications for the post, and then participate in a panel to screen and select the appropriate candidate.	A panel consisting of representatives of the Director-General and Governing Bodies, as well an evaluation specialist from another UN agency reviewed the terms of reference and statement of qualifications for the position of Director. They then participated in a panel to screen and identify the appropriate candidate. See paragraph 42 of the Charter.	Done
The Director of Evaluation will serve for a fixed of four years with the possibility of renewal for a maximum of one further term, with no possibility for reappointment within FAO to another post or consultancy for at least one year.	See paragraph 43 of the Charter.	Done
All appointments for evaluation of staff and consultants will follow transparent and professional procedures with the first criteria being technical competence but also with considerations of regional and gender balance. The Director of Evaluation will have the main responsibility for the appointment of evaluation staff and the responsibility for appointment of consultants in conformity with FAO procedures.	See paragraph 41 of the Charter.	Done

Action Identified	Action Taken	Present Status
Quality assurance and continued strengthening of the evaluation function: Strengthening the existing independent peer review of major reports.	This is supposedly in response to IEE Recommendation 7.10b, which recommends "establishment of a small expert evaluation Panel to provide advice to the Governing Bodies on evaluation policy and standards." In terms of strengthening of existing independent peer review of major reports, this has partly been implemented. Independent peer reviewers are used to review the technical content of evaluations to the Governing Bodies. Independent evaluation peer reviewers were also used for two major evaluations, but the practice has been discontinued.	Partly done?
Quality assurance and continued strengthening of the evaluation function: Biennial review by a small group of independent peers for conformity of work to evaluation best-practice and standards—report to management and the Council together with the recommendations of the Programme Committee.	See paragraph 30 of the Charter.	Done
Quality assurance and continued strengthening of the evaluation function: Independent Evaluation of the evaluation function every six years—report to management and the Council together with the recommendations of the Programme Committee.	See paragraph 30 of the Charter.	Done
Approval by the Council of a comprehensive evaluation policy incorporated in a "Charter," including the above, and a) the FAO internal evaluation committee will interact with the Programme Committee as appropriate.	Not explicitly stated in the Charter that the FAO internal evaluation committee will interact with the Programme Committee as appropriate. Does not happen in practice.	Partly done
Approval by the Council of a comprehensive evaluation policy incorporated in a "Charter," including the above, and b) the rolling evaluation plan will continue to be approved by the Governing Bodies, following consultation with the internal evaluation committee.	Charter (see paragraph 36 (1) states that the rolling evaluation plan will be approved by the Governing Bodies. In Charter (paragraph 40), the Evaluation Committee's responsibilities include the following: "review of the coverage of evaluation, proposals for the evaluation work programme and the terms of reference of major evaluations." But link between work of the Programme Committee and Evaluation Committee on the rolling work plan not explicitly set out in the Charter.	Partly done
Approval by the Council of a comprehensive evaluation policy incorporated in a "Charter," including the above, and c) the follow-up processes for evaluation will be fully institutionalized, including an independent monitoring system and reporting to the Programme Committee.	Systems are in place but still thought not to be fully effective. No independent monitoring system for tracking implementation of recommendations in place.	Partly done
Approval by the Council of a comprehensive evaluation policy incorporated in a "Charter," including the above, and d) all evaluation reports, management responses, and follow-up reports will continue to be public documents, fully available to all FAO Members. Efforts to discuss and bring the reports to the attention of all concerned Governing Body members will also be further strengthened through consultative groups and workshops on individual evaluations.	All evaluations and management responses/follow-up reports available through OED website. In most, but not all cases, supporting annexes to the evaluations are also available through the website. Consultative Groups have been established and used in most evaluations.	Done
Approval by the Council of a comprehensive evaluation policy incorporated in a "Charter," including the above, and e) the evaluation office will have an institutionalized advisory role to management on RBM and programming and budgeting, reinforcing the feed-back and learning loop.	Role included in the Charter, but not implemented to date and no evidence that seen as a priority by the OED.	Partly done

Action Identified	Action Taken	Present Status
Approval by the Council of a comprehensive evaluation policy incorporated in a "Charter," including the above, and f) evaluation will be well coordinated within the UN system, taking account of the work of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) and the evaluation office will continue to work closely with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG).	Review of work program shows that OED senior staff play active role in UNEG.	Done
The provisions for evaluation as approved in the Charter reflected in the Basic Texts		Done

FAO

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY
EVALUATION OFFICE

OECD DAC Evaluation Network

UNEG

Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs

UNEP