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# PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

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**Evaluation of FAO's South-South and Triangular Cooperation**

**Management's Response**

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## I. General Response

1. Management welcomes the *Evaluation of FAO's role and work on South-South and Triangular Cooperation* (hereinafter referred to as the "Evaluation"), and would like to take this opportunity to thank the Evaluation Team for its hard work, in particular for its constructive conclusions and recommendations, which were duly taken into consideration.
2. Management also appreciates the Evaluation's acknowledgement of FAO's significant progress in facilitating South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC), which started in 1979, when FAO first established a focal point for South-South cooperation, and the opportunity for FAO to play a leading role within the UN system. Furthermore, Management appreciates the recognition of FAO as a trusted and credible organization, which provides a framework for cooperation, a neutral forum for negotiations among countries, and technical skills to identify areas of focus and guide implementation across the project cycle.
3. Management further appreciates the endorsement of the Evaluation on FAO's ability to identify and promote a variety of "Southern solutions" that was recognized by government counterparts as an area of strength and that SSTC projects have, to a large extent, been relevant to national plans, priorities and partners' needs.
4. Management welcomes the recognition that SSTC collaboration is an increasingly important agenda item for the Rome-based Agencies (RBAs), as reflected in the joint roadmap for SSTC. The three agencies - FAO, IFAD and WFP - took a step further and have joined forces in an attempt to contribute to transform global agrifood systems by way of national Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) programmes through SSTC. This joint programme was recently presented at the Global South-South Development Expo (GSSD Expo), held from 12 to 14 September 2022 in Bangkok, Thailand, in the form of a Thematic Solution Forum jointly organized by the RBAs.
5. Management welcomes the positive acknowledgment of the South-South and Triangular Cooperation Division (PST) Guidelines for Action (2022-2025) (hereinafter referred to as the "Guidelines")<sup>1</sup> that are the result of FAO's efforts to meet the growing demands for FAO support from Members, while strengthening the internal enabling environment for SSTC, including results-based evidence on it.
6. FAO Management takes note of the main findings and recommendations. Management would benefit from further detail on some of the recommendations (Strategic Direction, Enabling Environment for SSTC, Project/Programme Design and Resource Mobilization, etc.) and would welcome further proposals to guide and strengthen FAO's SSTC work in the future.

## II. Response by recommendation

7. Management accepts all of the four recommendations. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4 below elaborate on each of the recommendations.
  - a) **Recommendation 1: As its humanitarian response work expands, FAO should consider how to leverage SSTC as a mechanism to implement emergency and resilience projects.**

FAO Management accepts Recommendation 1. The recommendation points out an area that has been prioritized in the Guidelines, as part of the broader need to strengthen engagement and integration with the work of technical offices/divisions and centres. SSTC has been endorsed and applied within FAO and by Members as one of the preferred delivery modalities for the pursuit of FAO strategic outcomes and associated Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) targets, which complements FAO traditional North-South partnership modalities. Therefore, considering that SSTC projects cover an extensive spectrum of technical and cross-cutting themes, the SSTC mechanism is applicable to different areas of work, including in humanitarian responses. In light of the current and previous engagements of SSTC in different emergency projects (e.g. fall armyworm, desert locust and transboundary animal diseases), and based on the lessons learned,

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/CB8176EN/>

FAO will build upon these for further collaboration to leverage SSTC as a mechanism to implement emergency and resilience projects. Management also acknowledges that facilitating SSTC in humanitarian response work would require considerable adjustments, as most SSTC funds are currently tied to the expertise and resources of the funding providers. As a consequence, the required expertise to address the emergency situations may not always be available and priorities may need to be aligned.

- b) Recommendation 2: FAO should systematically consider context-specific issues and local needs in the design of SSTC interventions. Some suggested actions include ensuring appropriate context analysis, considering synergies with other FAO projects and/or partners' initiatives, wider engagement with non-government actors, and improving access to documentation on results and lessons learned.**

FAO Management accepts Recommendation 2, noting that this area constitutes a primary focus for FAO under the Guidelines. Mindful of the need to improve the design, formulation and results-based architecture of SSTC projects, in 2022 FAO has engaged in an extensive effort of designing accompanying tools and instruments for the Guidelines. With the launch of the Guidelines in early 2022, Management has accelerated strategic, corporate and operational improvements to increase both the scale and the quality of its engagement in SSTC. FAO is investing in the design of SSTC interventions by developing a toolkit for effective SSTC within FAO's Project Cycle Management (SSTC Toolkit). FAO has developed this SSTC Toolkit with the purpose of providing FAO project teams with consistent and easy-to-use guidance on how to integrate SSTC throughout the different phases of FAO's Project Cycle.

- c) Recommendation 3: FAO should place greater focus on supporting the creation of an enabling environment for SSTC, in order to ensure greater ownership and enhanced prospects of replication.**

FAO Management agrees with Recommendation 3. In recognition of the need for an enabling environment for greater ownership and enhanced prospect of replication, FAO Management will build on the Guidelines that have already identified Strategic Areas of Focus (SAFs), as well as Thematic Areas of Focus (TAFs), such as the Hand-in-Hand (HIH) Initiative, agricultural innovation, support for Small Island Developing States and the COVID-19 Recovery and Response Programme.<sup>2</sup> The Guidelines stress the need to further increase awareness, visibility and outreach on SSTC, both internally and externally (SAF1), the need to have an enabling environment that also encompasses partnerships and strategic alliances (SAF3), enhancing technical capacities within FAO and SSTC mainstreaming into corporate programming, monitoring and evaluation (SAF4), and resource mobilization (SAF3). Management would also like to highlight that strengthening countries' capacities to engage in mutually beneficial, practical, and meaningful SSTC is central to FAO's mission and is reflected in SAF2 of the Guidelines.

Finally, Management highlights that, in collaboration with key divisions, PST is also working on a series of capacity development for resource mobilization activities aimed at enabling FAO personnel at headquarters and in Decentralized Offices with key knowledge, skills and tools that can increase the quality of support provided to countries and development partners in order to strengthen SSTC, improve its implementation and further its mainstreaming. These steps are all expected to contribute towards the creation of an enabling environment for greater ownership and enhanced potential to replicate SSTC actions.

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<sup>2</sup> FAO's work on SSTC in 2022–2025 will be channeled under the four strategic areas of focus (SAFs), to be carried out in close collaboration with FAO streams/offices/divisions/centres as well as countries and regions: i) SAF1 (advocacy and agenda setting); ii) SAF 2 (brokering knowledge); iii) SAF 3 (partnerships and collaborations); iv) and SAF 4 (evidence base and adaptive learning).

The highest level of country ownership of SSTC has very recently been demonstrated by the Republic of Uganda where the government is putting USD 9.6 million through a Unilateral Trust Fund to implement Phase III of a SSTC project.

**d) Recommendation 4: FAO should revamp its strategic guidance, communication and resource mobilization efforts in order to better incorporate cross-cutting themes, improve awareness and diversity partnerships.**

FAO Management agrees with Recommendation 4 and fully acknowledges the need to better incorporate cross-cutting themes (i.e. climate change, gender, governance and nutrition) which will be duly reflected not only in the Guidelines but also in communication and resource mobilization efforts. To operationalize the Guidelines, FAO is working on a SSTC Implementation Plan t (2022-2025), which envisages, among others, to provide further integration with other corporate strategies and initiatives. Management highlights that collaboration on integrating cross-cutting themes in the programming of SSTC activities is ongoing, such as the collaboration on climate change-related topics since 2020, including a joint case study highlighting FAO's work in promoting a sustainable bioeconomy which was launched during the side event<sup>3</sup> held at the 2019 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP25). On the topic of nutrition, extensive internal and external collaboration led to the development of the RBAs' joint initiative for home-grown school feeding (HGSF) using SSTC that was recently presented at the Global South-South Development Expo 2022. With respect to governance and Indigenous Peoples' themes, Management acknowledges there are gaps and will duly consider these in the upcoming work. Substantial improvements have been made in communication and improved visibility of products and activities and attention will be paid to showcasing the results of SSTC across cross-cutting themes. Management will also consider integrating cross-cutting themes in the upcoming capacity development for resource mobilization activities in collaboration with key divisions.

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<sup>3</sup> "Achieving NDC targets through South-South and Triangular Cooperation on bioeconomy"

***Evaluation of FAO's South-South and Triangular Cooperation - Management response matrix***

<b>Evaluation Recommendation</b>	<b>Management Response:</b> <b>Accepted</b> <b>Partially Accepted</b> or <b>Rejected</b>	<b>Management Actions to be taken, and/or comments about partial acceptance or rejection</b>	<b>Responsible Unit</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Further funding required (Y or N)</b>
<b>Recommendation 1.</b> As its humanitarian response work expands, FAO should consider how to leverage SSTC as a mechanism to implement emergency and resilience projects.	<b>Accepted</b>	The following steps are examples of how this collaboration could be further strengthened: a) Organization of a technical meeting to raise improved awareness and understanding of FAO's SSTC; b) Set up of a working mechanism among relevant divisions/offices. In order to ensure that SSTC can be further facilitated, it would be helpful if relevant technical divisions appoint an SSTC focal point.	PST in collaboration with OER and technical divisions	2024-25	Y extrabudgetary
<b>Recommendation 2.</b> FAO should systematically consider context-specific issues and local needs in the design of SSTC interventions. Some suggested actions include ensuring appropriate context analysis, considering synergies with other FAO projects and/or partners' initiatives, wider engagement with non-government actors, and improving access to documentation on results and lessons learned.	<b>Accepted</b>	With the launch of the Guidelines, Management has accelerated strategic, corporate and operational improvements to increase both the scale and the quality of its engagement in SSTC. Management will attempt to further fine-tune the SSTC Toolkit subject to feasibility, by ensuring a more systematic consideration of context-specific issues and local needs in the design of SSTC interventions.	PST in collaboration with Decentralized Offices	2024-25	N

Evaluation Recommendation	Management Response: Accepted Partially Accepted or Rejected	Management Actions to be taken, and/or comments about partial acceptance or rejection	Responsible Unit	Timeframe	Further funding required (Y or N)
<p><b>Recommendation 3.</b> FAO should place greater focus on supporting the creation of an enabling environment for SSTC, in order to ensure greater ownership and enhanced prospects of replication. Some suggested actions include providing targeted capacity building to personnel and government staff involved in SSTC, and advocating for greater priority to SSTC interventions at country office level.</p>	Accepted	<p>In terms of next steps, Management will continue the capacity development activities aimed at enhancing the capacity of FAORs with due attention to mapping countries' comparative advantages/solutions/needs and identifying areas for practical support of their engagement in SSTC.</p>	<p>PST in collaboration with related divisions/offices/centres and Decentralized Offices</p>	2024-25	N
<p><b>Recommendation 4.</b> FAO should revamp its strategic guidance, communication and resource mobilization efforts in order to better incorporate cross-cutting themes, improve awareness and diversify partnerships.</p>	Accepted	<p>PST is working on the SSTC Implementation Plan (2022-2025), which envisages, among others, to provide further integration with corporate strategies, such as the FAO Gender Strategy, the Nutrition Strategy, and the Climate Change Strategy.</p>	<p>PST in collaboration with related divisions/offices/centres and Decentralized Offices</p>	2024-25	N