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Cover page photograph: © Karianako James: In Kiribati, the village of Burariki has worked with the Community Based Fisheries Management project (CBFM) to ban the fishing of species like the goatfish during its spawning season. Fisherman Orea Teiarta notes that this is important to secure resources for future generations.

Foreword

The unprecedented events of the last few years – escalating conflicts, COVID-19, climate change, and rising costs – underscore the vital role of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in leading international efforts to combat hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. FAO’s rapidly evolving response to these challenges, and in particular the formulation of a new FAO Strategic Framework (2022–31), placed new demands on the FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) during the biennium. So did the COVID pandemic, which limited our ability to conduct field work and reach stakeholders. Realizing this is the “new normal,” OED is embracing these challenges as an opportunity to transform itself.


This report is testament to these efforts. OED managed to complete an extraordinary amount of work and, late in the biennium, begin a deep strategic planning process under the guidance of the new Director of Evaluation. These ongoing efforts have resulted in an interim strategy that will guide OED’s work over the next couple of years. The warm welcome and collaborative spirit with which this strategy has been received both in headquarters and across regions, by Management and Members, bodes well for its future.

At the heart of OED’s interim strategy is a deep commitment to conducting high quality evaluations that generate useful evidence and transformative recommendations that inform thinking, deliberations and, ultimately, decisions of FAO, Members, donors, partners and other actors seeking to support the 2030 Agenda through the transformation to MORE efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems (FAO Strategic Framework 2022–31).

We look forward to continuing to work with FAO Management, Members, and colleagues inside and outside of FAO eradicate hunger, eliminate poverty and sustainably manage and utilize natural resources.

Clemencia Cosentino

Director, Office of Evaluation



Balkh, Afghanistan - Wheat fields, grown from certified seeds distributed by FAO, ready for harvesting in Barmazid village of Balkh district.

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Acronyms

AMR	Antimicrobial resistance
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FMM	Flexible Multi-Partner Mechanism
OED	FAO Office of Evaluation
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
PC	Programme Committee
PBF	Peacebuilding Fund
PER	Programme Evaluation Report
RBA	Rome-based Agencies
SSTC	South-South and triangular cooperation

Abstract

This Programme Evaluation Report focuses on evaluations conducted by the FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) in the 2021–2022 biennium. These include project, programme, country, and thematic evaluations of development and emergency and resilience interventions. The report provides a descriptive analysis of evaluations conducted by OED in 2021–2022 and presents findings generated through an extensive review and synthesis across the portfolio of evaluation reports produced in the biennium, structured along the main recurring broad themes and specific topics within themes. The learning emerging from these evaluations aims to support FAO Management and Members in their efforts to support the 2030 Agenda through the transformation to MORE efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems. Lastly, the report presents a brief overview of OED’s strategy over the next two years, which focuses on building capacity to conduct rigorous evaluations to further promote OED’s effectiveness and efficiency in generating robust evidence that is useful to FAO and its stakeholders.

Amazon, Brazil - Paumari Indigenous People's vessel on the river Tapauá, in the lands of the Paumari Indigenous Peoples.

Introduction

1. **This Programme Evaluation Report (PER or Report) focuses on evaluations conducted by the FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) in the 2021–2022 biennium.** These include project, programme, country, and thematic evaluations of development and emergency and resilience interventions.
2. **The adoption of a new FAO Strategic Framework (2022–2031) during the biennium placed new demands on OED.** This Strategic Framework guides the work of FAO in supporting the 2030 Agenda through the transformation to MORE efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems for *better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life*, leaving no one behind. Based on this Strategic Framework, OED has started to deliver a new type of strategic evaluation focused on specific Programme Priority Areas (PPAs).
3. **The learning emerging from evaluations and shared in Section 2 of this report aims to support FAO Management and Members** in their efforts to strengthen agrifood systems to ensure food security, nutrition and resilient livelihoods, promote innovations, catalyse investments and leverage partnerships.
4. **To further promote its effectiveness and efficiency in generating robust evidence that is useful to FAO and its stakeholders, OED has developed an interim strategy¹** that will guide the work of the office over the next two years and is briefly described in Section 3 of this report.
5. **This report contains three sections. Section 1** provides a descriptive analysis of the evaluations conducted by OED in 2021–2022 and an overview of the methodology used to generate findings included in **Section 2. Section 3** presents a brief overview of OED’s interim strategy, which focuses on building capacity to conduct rigorous evaluations in support of FAO. Throughout the text, numbers in brackets identify sources in the list of references found at the end of this document. Information on the current work plan of evaluations 2022-2025 and financial analysis are available in OED’s website (<https://www.fao.org/evaluation/en>).

Barskoon, Kyrgyzstan - A couple of models wearing samples of dresses.



¹ <https://www.fao.org/3/nl201en/nl201en.pdf>

1. Portfolio of evaluations

1.1. Descriptive analysis of the portfolio of evaluations conducted in 2021–2022

1. **During the 2021–2022 biennium, OED carried out a total of 103 evaluations and 3 syntheses of evaluations.** These included 74 project and programme evaluations in 53 countries, 21 regional and country-level evaluations, and eight thematic evaluations that were mostly global (Exhibit 1).² Through these efforts, OED covered all regions in which FAO operates (Exhibit 2) and nearly USD 2 billion of FAO's portfolio of work. Thematic and strategic evaluations accounted for 58 percent of this funding, whereas project/programme and country programme evaluations accounted for 29 percent and 13 percent respectively. Despite disruptions caused by the COVID-pandemic, the number of evaluations completed by OED continued to increase over time, from 66 in 2017–2018 to 95 in 2019–2020 and 106 in 2021–2022.

Exhibit 1. Number of evaluations completed by region and evaluation type (2021–2022)³

Region	Evaluation Type				Total	Percent
	Synthesis	Thematic / Strategic	Country Programme	Project / Programme		
Africa	1	1	10	20	32	30%
Asia and the Pacific			2	17	19	18%
Europe and Central Asia	1		1	4	6	6%
Latin America and the Caribbean			4	12	16	15%
Near East and North Africa			4	6	10	9%
Global	1	7		15	23	22%
Total	3	8	21	74	106	100%
Percent	3%	8%	20%	70%		

Note: The project/programme column includes one global programme evaluation; the remainder are project evaluations. Some of the completed evaluations shown in this table will be published by the second quarter of 2023 (namely, 24 project evaluations, 12 country programme evaluations, 1 synthesis). These evaluations will be part of the analysis for the next PER. Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Office of Evaluation; data as of March 2023

2. **Project and programme evaluations were conducted across all regions where FAO operates, spanning the breadth of the Organization's areas of work.** This included climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience; emergencies and food security information systems; nutrition; sustainable crop production intensification; family farming; agrochemicals management; food loss and waste; food safety; value chains and agribusinesses; sustainable fisheries and aquaculture management; animal health and integrated livestock schemes; land tenancy; and natural resource rehabilitation and management (including ecosystems and biodiversity, forest, soil and water resources). Evaluations performed at global and interregional level covered FAO's

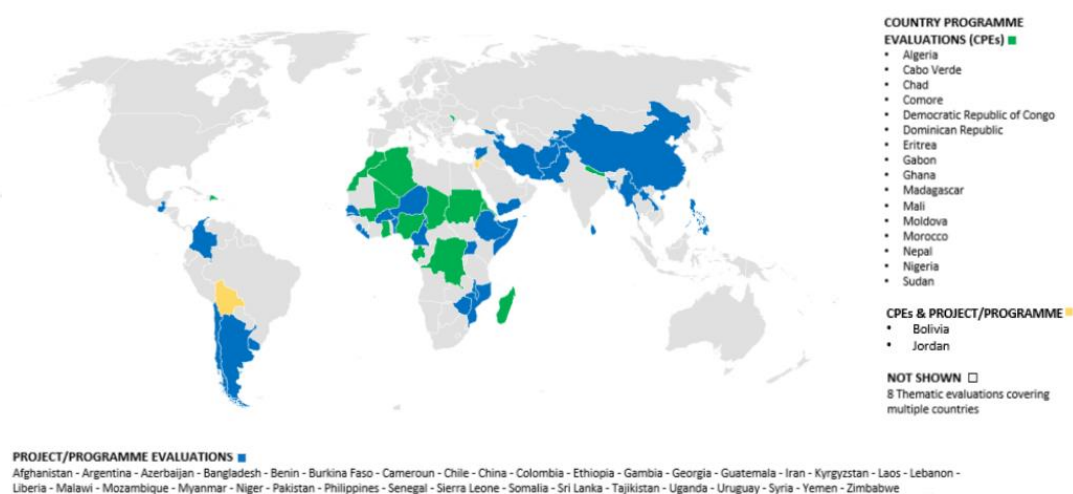
² This includes global and country-level evaluations not only of projects but also of programmes funded by extra-budgetary sources.

³ Information on the current work plan of evaluations 2022–2025 and financial analysis are available in OED's website (<https://www.fao.org/evaluation/en>)

work related to Action Against Desertification (AAD)^[43], livestock environmental assessment^[51], systems for earth observation data access and analysis for land monitoring,^[52] and 'Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC)'.^[26]

3. **Most country programme evaluations were completed in African nations** (Exhibits 1 and 2). These evaluations are generally conducted in response to FAO demand, such as evaluations aligned with the development of new country programming frameworks or with the arrival of a new FAO country representative seeking evidence that may support their efforts to lead the office.

Exhibit 2. Geographic distribution of evaluations (2021–2022)



Source: Elaborated by the Office of Evaluation. Map conforms with UN Geospatial. 2022. *Map of the World*. <https://www.un.org/geospatial/content/map-world>

4. **Thematic evaluations included the following:**

- 🌱 FAO's Contribution to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6
- 🤝 FAO's Flexible Multi-partner Mechanism (FMM)
- 🚫 FAO's Role and work on antimicrobial resistance
- 🦟 FAO's Response to the desert locust upsurge (Phase II and Phase III)
- 🤝 FAO's South–South and Triangular Cooperation
- 🏛️ Collaboration among the Rome-based agencies
- 🛡️ FAO's COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme

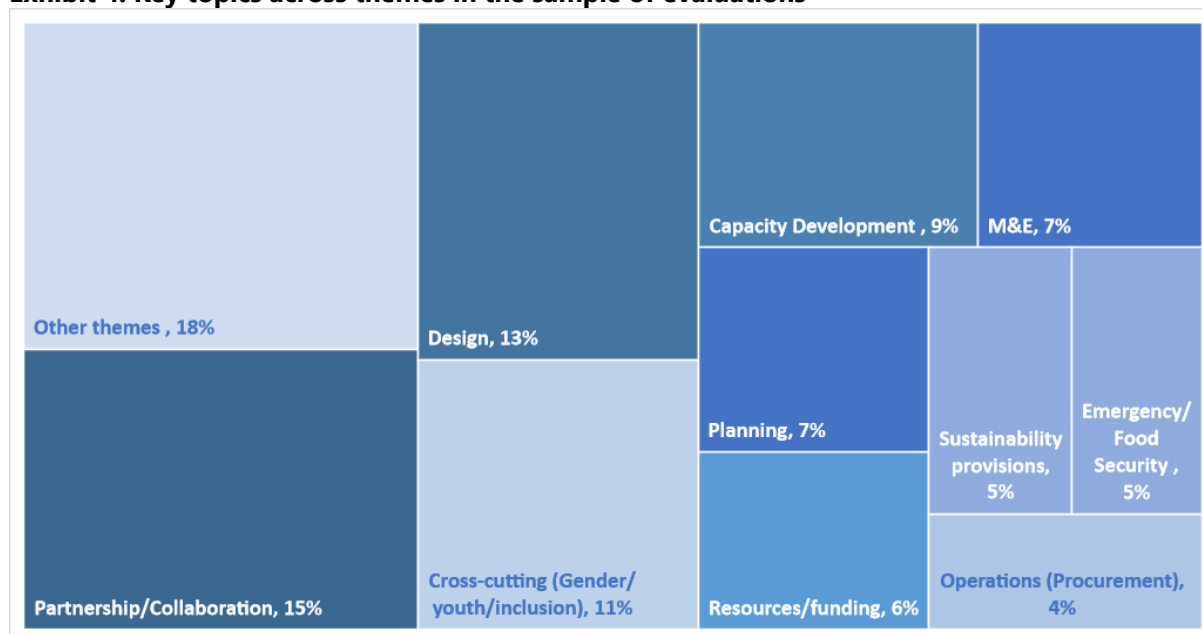
5. **Regional syntheses responded to an invitation from the 125th Session of the Programme Committee (PC)** for OED to prepare regional syntheses of the results and lessons learned from the country-level evaluations for the FAO Regional Conferences. OED conducted two regional syntheses in the biennium 2021–2022, one for the Africa Regional Conference and one for the Europe and the Central Asia Regional Conference. The regional syntheses were an opportunity to systematically consolidate the many evaluations conducted during the period, offering tailored products that were potentially more useful to FAO Members than individual evaluations or a

synthesis at global level. These syntheses generated new insights by identifying emerging themes across evaluations, such as sustainability of results, youth as a key beneficiary group to be targeted, new partnership approaches, Decentralized Office capacities, and effective knowledge management in FAO's interventions at regional level.

1.2. Methodology used to produce learning reported in Section 2


6. The qualitative analysis presented in Section 2 of this report is based on a systematic review of evaluations completed by OED in the 2021–2022 biennium. The sample of evaluations used for this analysis includes 69 published evaluations: 50 project or programme evaluations (at global and country levels), 9 country programme evaluations, 8 thematic evaluations, and 2 evaluation syntheses.
7. These evaluations focused on interventions across the globe – in Africa (28 percent), Asia and the Pacific (17 percent), Latin America and the Caribbean (14 percent), the Near East and North Africa (9 percent), and Europe and Central Asia (7 percent). Global and inter-regional evaluations accounted for 25 percent of the sample included in this analysis. This distribution closely aligns with the overall distribution for the entire portfolio described in Section 1 of this report.
8. The qualitative analysis is based on a classification of every evaluation report under two levels of coding. The first level corresponds to the evaluation's main theme, determined by the project objectives or nature of interventions in central work areas of FAO, including food safety, food security, emergency and resilience, climate change adaptation and mitigation, natural resource management, sustainable agricultural production, value chains and rural transformation. The second level focused on coding the most recurring topics under each of these themes (Exhibit 4).

Exhibit 4. Key topics across themes in the sample of evaluations



Source: Elaborated by the Office of Evaluation; data as of March 2023.

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9. **The analysis presented below is organized by the most frequent and relevant topics emerging from findings, conclusions, and recommendations from 69 evaluations conducted in the 2021–2022 biennium (Exhibit 4).**⁴ The observations from evaluations showcased in Section 2 below were selected to provide a representative assessment of key insights emerging in each topic, highlighting both accomplishments and areas of improvement.
10. **Most evaluations included in this report were conducted during the global COVID-19 pandemic, which impeded the ability of evaluation teams to launch field missions for primary data collection** as a result of the travel restrictions and social distancing requirements in place across many countries. To continue to deliver timely, high-quality and independent evaluations, OED adapted its work, leveraging technology to conduct stakeholder and beneficiary interviews remotely, relying more heavily on in-depth analyses of available secondary data sources (such as project data and documents), and increasing engagement of national evaluation consultants to facilitate field work when possible.



Chimoio, Mozambique – A farmer with one of his two wives walking to a field on the farm to harvest maize.

⁴ Recommendations in the PER 2023 sample of evaluations show a distribution of 78 percent accepted, 20 percent partially accepted, 2 percent rejected.

2. Findings from evaluations of FAO's programme of work

11. This section includes examples of key findings on the most recurrent topics identified in the evaluations conducted in the biennium.

2.1. Partnerships

Strategic and inclusive partnerships are essential for achieving results.

12. As evidenced by coordination and cooperation with a broad set of relevant ministries, regional and national institutions, academia, civil society organizations, the private sector and other development partners, the breadth and depth of FAO's partnerships at country level emerge as a good predictor of the quality of a country programme. Inclusive partnerships – that is, those built on mutual complementarities and nurtured over the long term and not just through *ad hoc* activities as implementing partners – provide additional strategic and operational depth to FAO's catalytic action. Jordan is a good example, where improved operations, outreach and coordination efforts focused on building new and strong partnerships are credited with markedly improving the effectiveness and visibility of FAO work in the country, as assessed by an evaluation of the country programme.^[13]
13. In the Republic of Moldova^[11] FAO nurtured long-standing relations with the national government and key development partners (including UN agencies and non-state actors) to mobilize and use pooled resources. Strategic partnerships with national institutions and international agencies in Morocco^[9] have influenced FAO's effective positioning positively, both within and outside the Country Programming Framework. Stakeholders often expect FAO to take on a stronger leadership role in supporting the government's efforts to establish and implement adequate agricultural strategies and policies, such as in Madagascar^[10]. A related role is to strengthen the ownership and leadership of the relevant ministries in various coordination groups and thematic platforms relevant to the FAO mandate. As an example, in Food Security and Nutrition in the Republic of Moldova^[11], FAO facilitated communications with the donor community to avoid duplications and promote joint efforts and complementary initiatives.
14. The evaluation of the large Livelihoods and Food Security Programme in Zimbabwe^[48] serves as an apt example of FAO's capacity to improve extension service delivery and market access for farmers by facilitating a complex multi-partnership arrangement between a broad set of development partners (including line ministries, extension agencies, local governments, NGOs and academic institutions). This resulted in the adoption of a participatory pluralistic extension approach for effective and innovative modernization of the agricultural sector. The evaluation of FAO's South–South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC)^[6] found that FAO supported institutional collaboration through regional expert networks and academic organizations, with the majority of SSTC interventions offering a complementary model to the traditional relationship between donors and countries with a focus on peer-to-peer knowledge transfer and mutual learning. The SSTC model also contributed to an enhanced policy dialogue by promoting high-level learning exchanges (particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean) or through country-to-country sharing for harmonizing policies on common issues.

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15. Other evaluations, such as that of a multi-country project on action against desertification^[43], note that the geographical outreach and impact of FAO could be increased through partnerships with organizations with a strong livelihood approach for greater scale and coverage of interventions. Similarly, the evaluation of FAO's work on antimicrobial resistance (AMR)^[5] concluded that greater collaboration, for instance in research and capacity development, was key to building commitment and confidence among stakeholders, and recommended that greater collaboration in these areas be encouraged among personnel at all levels.

FAO projects demonstrated promising efforts for enhanced engagement with the private sector.

16. Following up on the 2019 private-sector partnership evaluation, FAO submitted a new Strategy for Private Sector Engagement 2021–2025 to the Council in November 2020. The analysis conducted for this report further highlights the importance of sustained engagement with the private sector. Measures taken by the Jordan Country Office management to improve operations^[13], outreach and coordination efforts focused on building new and strong partnerships to enhance the position of FAO Jordan in the food security sector and ensuring better visibility of FAO Jordan's work. The analysis also underscores the value of developing clear operational and procedural tools to effectively partner in emergency contexts (as highlighted in the evaluation of a project on promoting value chains in Afghanistan^[47], for example). Recently, FAO also started to build partnerships with the private sector in the country. Building such partnerships holds promise for addressing limitations in programming, such as the quality of FAO's cash programme in Somalia^[28] which was limited by relying on local partners as "service providers" rather than through long-term, strategic partnerships.

Recent update on FAO's private sector engagement. An update on FAO's private sector engagement has been presented at the 135th Session of the Programme Committee (PC 135/INF/2). Over the past year, FAO's work with the private sector has been underscored by a continued commitment to transparency and accountability, supported by digital tools that allow for improved monitoring and evaluation and a more strategic, proactive approach to identifying impactful engagement. Continuous capacity building for FAO personnel ensures that the Organization can continue to deliver on the vision of the Strategy.

Collaboration among Rome-based Agencies has enhanced knowledge sharing. Moving forward, FAO partnership efforts with UN agencies require harmonized programming in support of the "One UN" development system reform.

17. FAO is considered an important member of the United Nations Country Teams worldwide and the Organization works in partnership with other United Nations agencies. Collaboration with other UN agencies assumes particular importance in the context of the reform of the UN development system, which calls for planning and communication by the UN as a single entity at country level. A specific aspect of partnership development is the collaboration between Rome-based Agencies (RBAs). The joint evaluation of this partnership^{5,[2]} found that RBA collaboration enhanced the sharing of knowledge, lessons and good practices particularly around gender, nutrition and emergency response, resulting in strengthened outcomes. Notwithstanding this positive finding,

⁵ Jointly conducted by the evaluation offices of FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP).

the evaluation concluded that, overall, RBAs have made limited progress in reducing overlap, competition and duplication. Donor support for RBA collaboration is not as strong or coherent in practice as donor advocacy of it. Similarly, RBA leadership expresses a spectrum of support and scepticism about collaboration recognizing its many benefits, but in some cases doubtful about system-wide requirements and procedures.

18. Joint programming mechanisms at the country level were seen as key to ensuring constructive and robust RBA engagement. The Multi-Country Programme Evaluation for the Pacific Islands^[17] showed good collaboration among UN agencies and various partners. However, project-based and activity-oriented approaches were not amenable to ensuring sustainability of these partnerships, further constrained by insufficient technical experts in the subregion, particularly in the UN hubs. A country programme evaluation from a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), Cabo Verde,^[15] also noted the small size of the UN Country Team as a constraint, as well as the need to increase harmonization and consolidation of the Planet Agenda in the One UN Framework, where FAO Cabo Verde is the lead agency. UN partnerships appear to be particularly relevant in the implementation of the blue economy promoted by the UN Office in Cabo Verde in which UN agencies still seemed not to act as partners but rather as competitors. In Jordan,^[13] joint programming with UN partners has proven challenging, whereas in Madagascar^[10] the evaluation recommended better communication and increased commitment for creating synergies and joint projects.

Strategic partnerships are crucial for programme delivery in protracted crises.

19. FAO's humanitarian–development–peace (HDP) nexus approach to emergency and resilience interventions leverages strategic partnerships to strengthen collaboration, promote coherence, and pursue complementary interventions. Despite the small scale of the intervention, the evaluation of a project to support peaceful societies through women's improved access to management of natural resources in Sierra Leone^[31] has shown that UN agencies can work together on critical issues, with the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) as one of the main partnership drivers at country level. Another evaluation of a PBF project on intercommunity conflict prevention through developing resilient pastoralism in Chad and the Niger^[29] found strong and supportive partnerships. This included partnerships with the Government of the Niger through the High Authority for the Consolidation of Peace and among the UN co-implementing agencies through the PBF. In Yemen, the evaluation on the Water for Peace project to strengthen the role of women in water conflict resolution^[32] showed that a successful partnership between FAO and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), built in a previous PBF project, led to successful collaboration between the two agencies and was further developed to create local project ownership through other partnerships. On the other hand, the evaluation of a project cluster in Somalia^[28] on protecting, improving, and sustaining food security through interventions based on cash transfers to beneficiaries found that FAO Somalia should develop a strategic partnership framework, engaging more substantially with local partners, including through capacity development as needed.

2.2. Quality of design of projects and programmes

Contextualization of intervention designs varies across FAO projects.

20. The thematic evaluation of FAO's South–South and Triangular Cooperation^[6] found several examples of interventions well-designed to meet local needs and adapted to the local context, including strong engagement of technical stakeholders in Africa and Mesoamerica to ensure the alignment of project designs with local needs early in the project cycle. The country programming evaluation for Jordan^[13] highlighted that the programme was based on extensive consultations with government decision-makers and national stakeholders, responding to beneficiary needs while integrating global and country development and humanitarian priorities. Similarly, a project evaluation of an FAO project on water conflict resolution in Yemen^[32] assessed the design as well-adapted to the local context and using tailored approaches for specific vulnerable groups, which increased local ownership. In addition, an evaluation of FAO's contributions in the Latin America and Caribbean Region^[16] pointed out the holistic and coherent design of Regional Initiatives led by RLC, which were responsive to the changes and needs in the regions.
21. In contrast, the same evaluation of Regional FAO Initiatives in Latin America and the Caribbean flagged limitations in the design of initiatives that failed to take subregional characteristics into account, such as geographic, environmental, climate, socio–economic, political, and institutional characteristics. An evaluation of FAO's inter-regional programme on action against desertification^[43] found that the set of pre-packaged solutions applied in the eight countries covered by the project did not sufficiently consider concrete local, context-specific (environmental/sociocultural) situations, particularly in Fiji and Haiti. Deviations from the model were difficult to manage. Similarly, in an inter-regional project on National Adaptation Plans^[42], only some of the target countries (e.g., Nepal, Philippines and Thailand) developed needs assessments to guide implementation, while others did not. Country-specific activities and institutional capabilities were thus not reflected in the intervention designs. A cluster evaluation of food security emergency projects in Somalia^[28] noted the limited consultations with local stakeholders (Government, FAO sub-offices, beneficiaries, and partners) in centrally-focused design processes. Similarly, OED's Multi-Country Programme Evaluation for the Pacific Islands^[17] concluded that programme results could be strengthened by including a wider range of stakeholders during project design, with a particular focus on the needs of beneficiaries as agents of transformational change.

Devising comprehensive solutions through programmatic and long-term (as opposed to project-based, short-term) intervention approaches is key to achieving target outcomes.

22. In the past, OED evaluations had found that FAO's reliance on projects – as opposed to broader programmes – leads to a fragmented portfolio with high transaction costs, more limited strategic oversight and poor visibility of achieved results.⁶ This conclusion was reinforced by numerous thematic, country programme, and project evaluations conducted during the 2021–2022 biennium.

⁶ 2020. Evaluation of FAO's contribution to Sustainable Development Goal 2 - "End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture" Phase 2 (page 28, finding 32) <https://www.fao.org/3/cb1774en/cb1774en.pdf>. Note:

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23. The thematic evaluation of FAO's work on AMR^[5] found that only limited results were achieved on optimal antimicrobial use (AMU) despite implementation of a substantive array of activities across a wide range of countries. As a result, the evaluation recommended consolidating this work through a strong programmatic, multidisciplinary approach with a central coordination and management structure linking Regional Offices and supported by dedicated core funding.
 24. Similarly, three country programme evaluations called for more holistic, programmatic approaches in the Country Programming Frameworks as the respective country portfolios were found to (a) be fragmented into too many interventions and issues while not sufficiently balancing thematic areas as a result of lack of strategic vision (Morocco^[9]); (b) to lack holistic approaches to integrating agriculture and sustainable natural resource management, resulting in gaps in the coverage of priority areas (Madagascar^[10]); or (c) to be fragmented and lack synergies between interventions, with insufficient facilitation of results monitoring and decision-making (Plurinational State of Bolivia^[12]).
 25. In an evaluation of cash programming in Somalia,^[28] more integrated programming was recommended to build linkages between emergency, development and resilience interventions. An evaluation in Yemen^[33] provided a concrete example of the value of such programming. This evaluation found that flexible Food Security Information and Early Warning Systems can indeed support a shift from emergency to resilience by integrating humanitarian and development aspects and indicators as part of a broader set of linked interventions.
 26. A programmatic approach was also recommended in two evaluations of FAO projects in Afghanistan to enable longer intervention life spans. In a project promoting value chains^[47], repeated project extensions underscored the need for extended support across multiple phases to ensure the effectiveness of the provided equipment and cost-sharing grants for value chain development. Similarly, the experience^[22] in the Integrated Dairy Scheme project^[22] in the same country highlighted the need for longer life spans in project designs, considering the complexities in building milk-processing facilities and developing competent management structures to operate profit-generating facilities sustainably.
 27. In the Africa region, a synthesis of evaluations^[18] cautioned that FAO's portfolio of well-designed stand-alone projects is less likely to be impactful and sustainable than projects that form part of a well-designed programme. The evaluation of FAO's South-South and Triangular Cooperation^[6] found that projects integrating a robust set of enablers (including ownership, capacities, political support and resources) as part of systemic solutions, such as those implemented in projects in the Mesoamerica subregion and in Uganda, had results more likely to be sustained than those relying only on discrete technical assistance.

2.3. Beneficiary ownership and community groups

Although community participation in natural resource management can empower women, foster sustainable use of natural resources and enhance social cohesion, conflict sensitivity and conflict mitigation efforts are critical and sometimes overlooked in projects focused on natural resource management.

28. The evaluation of an FAO project on water conflict resolution in Yemen^[32] highlighted the significant changes that came about by establishing water user associations and strengthening the role of women in these groups. Notable project outcomes included more sustainable water

management, enhanced social status and decision-making power of women, and opportunities for displaced families to return to areas previously abandoned due to a lack of water. In turn, these outcomes were described as fostering social cohesion. A cluster evaluation of FAO projects in Cameroon, Chad, Mali and the Niger^[27] found that the introduction of the FAO Dimitra Clubs⁷ proved to be a key element in strengthening social cohesion, enhancing the role of women in society and supporting local livelihoods across the projects and target countries, particularly in the Niger.

29. In contrast, the same cluster evaluation found that, in Mali, the process of signing the management agreements negotiated and agreed upon with the populations using the pastures restored and regenerated with project support was left incomplete, which may generate potential conflicts over the restored land. An example of conflicts over natural resources impeding successful implementation is provided by the evaluation of FAO's inter-regional programme on action against desertification^[43]. Several instances of conflicts between sedentary and transhumant farmers appeared to have curtailed both successful reforestation, especially in Senegal and to a lesser extent in Ethiopia and Nigeria, and community engagement in these efforts. As a result, the evaluation recommended a more proactive approach to developing and adopting a conflict mitigation policy and fostering a dialogue between migrating cattle growers and sedentary farming communities. Lastly, despite the positive results achieved by the FAO project on water conflict resolution in Yemen^[32], the evaluation pointed at the need for a clearer, longer-term vision and funding mechanism for water user associations to sustain observed benefits beyond the duration of the programme.

2.4. Organizational planning and strategy formulation

Certain areas of recognized FAO technical expertise, such as water for agriculture or anti-microbial resistance (AMR), deserve higher prioritization and strategic integration.

30. The evaluation of FAO's contribution to SDG 6 on clean water and sanitation for all^[4] found that .FAO had accomplished valuable work, such as the modernization and rehabilitation of irrigated agriculture schemes. Yet this type of work has limited visibility in FAO's strategic documents. Integrating water resources management more firmly into the Strategic Framework and activities concerned with agricultural development, ecosystems management, rural livelihoods and climate change was deemed fundamental to their success. In particular, the evaluation underscored the need to prepare and implement a comprehensive, organizational response to the growing threat to water quality posed by pollution from agriculture. Similarly, the thematic evaluation of FAO's Work on AMR^[5] highlights the importance of developing a long-term strategy on AMR and integrating it fully in the Strategic Framework.

2.5. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems

Evaluations consistently find FAO M&E systems unfit to measure results systematically and comprehensively, and not used for adaptive management or improved designs and programming.

⁷ FAO-Dimitra Clubs are groups of rural women and men who decide to meet regularly to discuss the challenges they face in their daily lives, make decisions together and take collective action to solve community problems with their own means.

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31. In a few instances, monitoring data systems effectively support progress monitoring and results measurement. A case in point is described in the country programme evaluation for the Plurinational State of Bolivia,^[12] which found that the monitoring systems of an emergency project was used to track indicators of progress and results. However, this is not the norm. The vast majority of evaluation reports highlight limitations of M&E systems for country- or project-level monitoring. These systems are generally inadequate to monitor implementation progress or assess results systematically and comprehensively. As a result, they are neither used for adaptive management nor contribute learning to improve designs of follow-on projects. This represents a significant weakness for a knowledge organization such as FAO.
 32. For example, the evaluation of FAO's inter-regional programme on action against desertification^[43] found that the M&E system did not allow for proper results monitoring, learning from implementation, or documenting successes for outreach or in support of scale up. A cluster evaluation of FAO projects in Cameroon, Chad, Mali and the Niger^[27] found that M&E mechanisms were weak and did not allow personnel to draw lessons from implementation experiences, support adaptive management of interventions, or measure project outcomes. The synthesis of evaluations of FAO's contributions in the Africa Region^[18] highlighted serious limitations of M&E at country level and recommended that FAO Country Offices design and implement robust M&E systems. Similar findings emerge from project evaluations, such as an evaluation of land tenure in Pakistan^[54], forest resources in Azerbaijan^[56], and women's resource access and economic empowerment in Sierra Leone.^[31]

2.6. Resource mobilization

Unearmarked or lightly earmarked voluntary contributions remain critical to finance innovation and underfunded and emerging areas in FAO.

33. FAO relies on resource mobilization to fund many of its activities and programmes, including technical assistance, policy development, and capacity building. Not surprisingly, close relationships and engagement with partners is seen as critical to succeed in fundraising and scale up interventions. The evaluations conducted in the 2021–2022 biennium highlighted the need for FAO to develop clearer strategies and plans for mobilizing resources, strengthen coordination and collaboration among different units, engage more effectively with donors and partners, and be more innovative in its approaches to resource mobilization. Most evaluations mentioned insufficient donor engagement, inadequate funding modalities and uneven distribution of financial resources.
34. The evaluation of FAO's Flexible Multi-Partner Mechanism (FMM)^[4], a mechanism through which FAO's resource partners make unearmarked or lightly earmarked voluntary contributions, found the FMM to be of strategic relevance to FAO as a vehicle for financing innovation, underfunded or emerging areas. The mechanism gives FAO the flexibility to allocate voluntary contributions to FAO Members' priorities as expressed in the Strategic Framework and other corporate policies, with evidence of catalytic and transformative elements in FMM interventions. The evaluation identified a few areas of improvement. These include the adequate duration of sub-programmes, inclusion of Decentralized Offices in programme design, greater clarity on allocation criteria, and adequate use of results for knowledge management and organizational learning.

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35. Other evaluations also reinforced the need for strengthened and well-distributed funding. One of the main recommendations from the Real-time evaluation of FAO's COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme^[3] focuses on addressing funding shortfalls to promote a more even distribution of resources across programmatic priority areas. The Evaluation of the Global Livestock Environmental Assessment and Performance Partnership^[51] recommended to reduce budget uncertainty through improved long-term planning and a strengthened resource mobilization strategy (expanding the donor base or implementing joint activities). Finally, the evaluation of the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean^[16] concluded that the regional office should strengthen its resource mobilization strategy based on the Regional Initiatives to encourage a more active participation of Member Countries.

2.7. Procurement

Untimely response remains one of the main factors constraining the effectiveness of FAO emergency programmes. Decentralizing procurement – with fast-track procedures and additional support to country offices – can help address this limitation while strengthening local value chains.

36. Untimely response indeed remains one of the main factors constraining the effectiveness of FAO emergency programmes. This is exemplified by a cluster evaluation of five FAO projects in Cameroon, Chad, Mali and the Niger^[27], where internal disbursement and input procurement procedures, as well as drawing up memoranda of understanding with partners, slowed the implementation of some activities. The evaluation recommended to strengthen collaboration and synergy between the programme and procurement units to limit delays in issuing input supply contracts and the contracting of partners. Similarly, the Real-Time Evaluation of FAO's Response to the Desert Locust Upsurge^[8] highlighted how procurement processes hampered FAO's effort to ensure timely supply of equipment and pesticides, affecting the effectiveness of control operations. Specifically, a limited supplier pool for pesticides and other equipment, as well as overly complex FAO procurement procedures, presented a challenge for frontline actors as the 2020–2021 locust upsurge evolved rapidly. The evaluation identified areas for improvement in the procurement and pre-positioning of pesticides and essential equipment for locust upsurges. In the context of the outcomes of this evaluation, it should be noted that strong ownership of the evaluation results and recommendations on the part of Management of FAO's Office of Emergencies and Resilience (OER) has been evident, and the evaluation has been utilized to strengthen the rapport with the Desert Locust Control Committee (DLCL).
37. The Multi-Country Programme Evaluation for the Pacific Islands^[17] also found that FAO's cumbersome administrative rules hindered efficient project implementation, particularly due to procurement and recruitment delays. The consistent six-to-eight-month delay in emergency project implementation was flagged as risking FAO's reputation and resource mobilization. Similarly in Malawi, the evaluation of a project on community resilience to climate change^[49] highlighted implementation delays that occurred as a result of cumbersome procedures for the procurement of services through letters of agreement with implementing partners, with protracted initial engagement, short contracts and delayed renewals impeding efficiency and effectiveness.
38. The real-time evaluation of FAO's COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme^[3] found that, while the Programme response was generally timely, input procurement actions were delayed as a result of lengthy internal procurement procedures as well as the disruption of supply chains and

the limited availability of inputs locally. The evaluation recommended the application of fast-track procurement procedures for future similar situations and to improve timeliness in procurement processes through the support provided to country offices by International Procurement Officers.

39. Lastly, the evaluation of an agri-business promotion programme implemented since 2012 in a deprived and remote province of Pakistan^[46] found that procuring value chain inputs at the local level tends to be more timely, builds upon the local market system and strengthens market relationships. In contrast, procurement on the international market is often less timely and discourages local distributors in a fragile environment where they strive to survive. The “procurement for development” approach to build capacity of local markets and service providers for delivery of quality inputs to farmers was seen as central to the programme’s success.

2.8. Leaving no one behind

A number of projects demonstrated successful targeting and involvement of women in project activities, resulting in their social and economic empowerment. Gender analyses for targeted interventions and use of disaggregated data require further improvement.

40. In Yemen, beneficiary communities indicated that the project on strengthening Food Security Information and Early Warning Systems^[33] had succeeded in empowering women in water user associations and encouraging youth to contribute to the engineering aspects of the project. A cluster evaluation of five FAO projects in Cameroon, Chad, Mali and the Niger^[27] highlighted that, with regard to targeting and participation, gender considerations were fully integrated into beneficiary targeting and women were highly involved in project activities. The synthesis of evaluations included in SSTC thematic evaluation^[6] found that some initiatives have promoted gender equality and women’s empowerment through activities such as capacity building, exchange events and study tours. In Pakistan, the evaluation of the agri-business promotion programme^[46] noted that most successful enterprises owned by women and supported by the programme were still in the early stages of development. Broader engagement of women with livelihood systems at both household and village level will enable growth of their businesses and further economic empowerment.
- CAVEAT

Evaluations in the biennium were conducted remotely. This impacted outreach to beneficiaries, in particular women, youth and other vulnerable groups that are typically within the focus of OED evaluations.
41. The analysis of evaluations completed in the biennium has also identified limiting factors regarding gender aspects in FAO interventions, mostly linked to the lack of gender analysis and disaggregated data, which is a frequent problem. For instance, the cluster evaluation in Cameroon, Chad, Mali and the Niger^[27] highlighted that, despite the results achieved with regard to targeting and participation, the project did not have a clear strategy for gender equality and women’s empowerment, which prevented or constrained the identification of activities specifically adapted to women’s needs. A project on food loss reduction in Ethiopia^[44] showed gender-mainstreaming weaknesses in project design (such as absence of gender-transformative aims, specified targets for gender empowerment, and of a gender analysis for targeted capacity development activities), which could be linked to a lack of gender-dedicated personnel in the Country Office. The country programme evaluation in Madagascar^[10] also found that neither the gender focal point nor gender issues were systematically integrated in project design or implementation. Similarly, the evaluation

of FAO's Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Global Strategic Programme (GSP)^[26] reported that while geographic coverage and disaggregation increased during the evaluated programme phase (Phase II of GSP), the IPC analysis continued to be 'blind' to gender and other intersectional determinants of vulnerability, including displacement. The next phase of the IPC GSP should enable disaggregated analyses of other determinants of food insecurity, such as individual characteristics, livelihoods and social status.

The mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues such as conflict sensitivity and inclusion of marginalized populations requires sufficient prioritization, resources and systematic integration into activities.

42. The country programme evaluation in the Plurinational State of Bolivia^[12] noted the progress made with regard to the inclusion of indigenous peoples, as they have benefited from a large number of interventions and projects. In contrast, the evaluation of a project cluster on protecting, improving, and sustaining food security in rural Somalia^[28] recognized the lack of prioritization, resourcing and integration of cross-cutting issues (including gender, nutrition and social inclusion). The evaluation recommended for FAO Somalia and relevant units in headquarters to identify two or three priority cross-cutting issues to be addressed, with specific activities, resources and monitoring parameters to be identified for each issue. An apt positive example here would be the Mesoamerica without Hunger Programme^[50], which prioritized three population groups, whose social disadvantages, for reasons of ethnicity, gender and age, make them more vulnerable to risks and limit their access to development assets. Among the inclusion measures adopted by the programme were the choice of territorial zones with higher levels of prevalence of vulnerability and support for the preparation of learning guides on nutrition as well as public policy guidelines. However, structural disadvantages of these groups could have been reduced through their greater involvement in decision-making and adequate management of cultural dimensions. This particularly holds true for interacting with indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, whose cultural references and food systems were not taken into account in the design and implementation of the programme. The joint evaluation of the FAO–UNDP project on integrating agriculture into National Adaptation Plans (NAP-Ag)^[42] found that there was interesting youth-focused work in Uganda, but that the intervention did not generate much intentional partnerships with youth as stakeholders, problem solvers or agents of change in their communities. The evaluation of a project on improved land tenure in Pakistan^[54] highlighted targeting issues and recommended that a certain proportion of the beneficiaries be from poor and vulnerable households.

2.9. Data, technology, and innovation

Evaluations reinforce the value of data, technology, and innovations in support of FAO's work, highlighting the need for larger investments in this space.

43. Data, technology and innovation are critical accelerators of progress in FAO's Strategic Framework. Several evaluations showcased how this is indeed the case. For example, survey and control approaches, remote sensing and modelling were among the innovations successfully deployed in FAO's response to the desert locust upsurge.^[8] Similarly, a geospatial, satellite imagery-based monitoring tool tested under the inter-regional programme on action against desertification^[43] could be a valuable and cost-effective M&E tool to collect and analyse quantitative data on vegetation cover of land areas that is easy to use in generating estimates that are also easy to interpret. Another project – on community resilience to climate change^[49] – highlighted the successful deployment of innovative geo-spatial mapping to identify hotspot locations of highly degraded land areas that needed urgent action.
44. Developing such innovative approaches requires time and resources to test, adapt, and build capacity to use each approach in the target country or community context. Some evaluations stressed the need to validate new technologies through critical, well analysed on-farm research before promoting technologies on a wider scale to beneficiary communities (e.g. Zimbabwe^[48]). In some contexts, expanding and scaling up the use of technology will require greater effort and support to build capacity in young sectors and in collaboration with stakeholders, including the Ministry of Agriculture, the regional bureau of agriculture and other agencies (e.g. Ethiopia^[44]).



Oaxaca, Mexico - Women from the Huaves ethnic group carrying maize cobs in baskets on their heads and materials for weaving baskets under their arms.

3. FAO Office of Evaluation in the next biennium

45. As Section 2 of this report illustrates, the work of OED serves a vital function in providing FAO stakeholders – Management, Members, personnel, partners, and others – with critical evidence and lessons learned to inform programmatic, policy, operational, and financial decisions in support of efforts to combat hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. The unprecedented events of the last few years, including escalating conflicts, COVID-19, climate change, and rising costs, have made FAO’s job, and therefore OED’s, all the more challenging and needed.⁸ In the second half of 2022, OED embarked on an internal effort to assess how to revamp its operations to meet this challenge.
46. The result is an interim strategy⁹ that will guide the work of the office over the next two years with the goal of increasing its effectiveness and efficiency. Specifically, OED will focus on strengthening its capacity to:
- i. Generate robust and useful evidence that supports learning and accountability.
 - ii. Make potentially transformative recommendations to FAO stakeholders.
 - iii. Contribute knowledge to the field(s) in which FAO operates.
47. OED will aim to generate evidence and recommendations that inform *thinking, deliberations* and, ultimately, *decisions* of FAO, Members, donors, partners and other actors seeking to support the 2030 Agenda through the transformation to more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems for *better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life*, leaving no one behind (FAO Strategic Framework 2022–31).
48. OED is committed to conducting high-quality evaluations and measuring results – outcomes and impacts – to support robust ongoing learning while continuing to ensure accountability for FAO’s work. OED will seek to leverage the opportunities created by the evaluations of FAO’s breadth of work, including normative and policy advice, projects, programmes and other initiatives, to contribute evidence to FAO stakeholders and to the knowledge base across fields in which FAO operates, whenever this may be achieved as a by-product of OED’s work in support of FAO and its Members.
49. In executing its interim strategy, OED will be:
- i. Developing and revising policies, such as the new FAO evaluation policy that will guide evaluations across the Organization.
 - ii. Developing new procedures, such as an intake process to assess evaluation requests and establishing criteria to select evaluations to be prioritized.
 - iii. Leveraging cutting-edge data science and information technology solutions in support of project management, portfolio monitoring, and evaluations.
 - iv. Reorganizing the Office to promote efficiencies and pursuing a decentralization strategy anchored on building a stronger presence and capacity in the regions.

⁸ FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2022. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022. Repurposing food and agricultural policies to make healthy diets more affordable. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc0639en>

⁹ <https://www.fao.org/3/nl201en/nl201en.pdf>

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- v. Providing more robust support through expanded quality assurance processes and using external quality assessments to diagnose areas to improve over time.
 - vi. Strengthening and diversifying internal and external dissemination to facilitate use of evidence.
50. OED's interim strategy provides an initial architecture for excellence in supporting FAO Members and Management's culture of evidence in decision-making. It lays out the vision and approaches through which OED will aim to strengthen its capacity to respond to the evidence needs of FAO, its Members, and donors. OED is harnessing the experience, technical expertise and commitment of its personnel to drive a transformation of the Office and its work in support of FAO goals.



Cairo, Egypt – Varieties of pulses

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