

**EVALUATION of FAO COOPERATION
in SIERRA LEONE**

2001 – 2006

**FINAL REPORT
VOL I: MAIN REPORT**

**ROME
APRIL 2007**

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Foreword

Did FAO cooperation perform well in Sierra Leone between 2001 and 2006? The question is not an easy one to answer, and yet the overall effectiveness of development cooperation is an issue of increasing concern. While individual projects and programmes generally have specific objectives that include indicators at the different levels, this is not the case with FAO cooperation in a particular country. All that has been formulated is the expectation that the Organisation will contribute to achieving the MDGs, i.e. that it must be judged with regard to relevance and effectiveness (development impact).

Furthermore, FAO is not a donor. Rather, the partner country concerned is a member of FAO and FAO is accountable to its members. And the partner country – in this case Sierra Leone – can (hopefully) declare itself satisfied with the services offered.

Is it possible to carry out an evaluation in such circumstances? The terms of reference are geared towards: cooperation strategy and relevance of the programme; developmental effectiveness; institutional arrangements, modalities and processes; functioning of the FAO Representation – although precise targets for achievement are not mentioned. Then there is an emphasis on specific programmes and projects – financed by FAO-TCP or from external sources – which were carried out by FAO during the evaluation period. Even if links do exist between the individual initiatives, one simply cannot speak of a programme in this context. In the early part of the evaluation period, international support to Sierra Leone – and with it that of FAO – was dominated by emergency aid. Subsequently, the focus was on restoring agriculture on a more normal basis. These were very different types of assistance.

We began by attempting to assess the various projects and programmes according to internationally recognised evaluation criteria:

- Relevance:** Is FAO doing the right things?
- Efficiency:** Is FAO doing the right things in the right way, i.e. cost-effectively?
- Effectiveness:** Do FAO activities help to achieve the objectives?
- Impact:** Do FAO activities contribute to the achievement of overarching development goals (e.g. MDGs) and, if so, how?
- Sustainability:** Are the results sustained beyond the period of FAO assistance?

The evaluation did not only look at the design, implementation and results of emergency and development projects; it also assessed the work carried out by the FAO country office in Sierra Leone and support to the country given by the FAO Regional Office in Accra and FAO headquarters.

Germany was the most important external financier of development projects during the evaluation period. Four projects in Sierra Leone were supported through the bilateral fund of the German Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture, and Consumer Protection (BMELV); these were in the areas of food security / agricultural advice; seed production; right to food; and fair trade. Germany cooperated closely with the evaluation and two team members were seconded by the German international cooperation agency GTZ.

The entire team was welcomed and treated in a friendly and obliging manner in Sierra Leone. The decision makers in the Sierra Leonean Government – especially the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) – showed a great deal of interest in the mission. They confirmed what they saw as the valuable support of the FAO Representation. Nonetheless, the staffing and institutional capacity of the ministries, as well as of the decentralised structures that were newly formed in 2005 (District Councils), are such that an efficient and effective cooperation remains dogged by many fundamental weaknesses. The answer given once in response to a question about priority setting summed up the situation: Priorities? We have so many priorities!

The final evaluation was preceded by an inception mission undertaken by the FAO Evaluation Service in July 2006, to gather information and consult with the Government, members of the UN system and other donors on the issues to be covered. The next step was the conduct of impact studies at field level on key programme areas (Farmers' Field Schools and emergency interventions), carried out by a Sierra Leone team under supervision of the Evaluation Service.

The final evaluation was held in February 2007. The eight-member evaluation team (a staff member and a consultant from the FAO Evaluation Service, an FAO Internal Auditor, three international consultants and two national consultants) met all together for the first time in Freetown. Also present as a resource person was the former FAO Representative, Mohammed Farah. Although he retired in August 2006, the FAOR post was still vacant at the time of the evaluation. The allocation of tasks and roles in the team posed no problems whatsoever. The project visits, conducted in small groups, provided an extremely useful insight into the conditions surrounding development cooperation in the rural areas of Sierra Leone. The desire to live peacefully alongside one another was expressed convincingly everywhere, so that hope for corresponding progress in development was reinforced, despite the prevailing difficulties.

With the completing of this report – to which everyone made their expected contribution – I would like, as head of the evaluation team, to thank the members of the team for the successful and goal-oriented team work undertaken. The absorbing work proved to be no hindrance to a positive atmosphere – on the contrary! We wish FAO – and Sierra Leone – every success in implementing the recommendations we have proposed. In future, it may then be easier to answer the question: Did FAO cooperation perform well in Sierra Leone?

Klaus Pilgram

Team Leader of the Evaluation

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ABU	Agricultural Business Units
ADB	African Development Bank
AFSP	FAO Procurement Service
AOS	Administrative and Operational Support
ASR	Agricultural Sector Review
ASREP	Agricultural Sector Rehabilitation Project
BADEA	Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa
BMELV	German Federal Ministry for Food, Agriculture, and Consumer Protection (Bundesministerium für Ernährung, Landwirtschaft und Verbraucherschutz)
CAADP	Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme
COIN	Country Office Information Network
CORAD	Consortium for Rehabilitation and Agricultural Development
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
DACO	Sierra Leone Development Assistance Coordination Office
DGB	Director General's Bulletin
DFID	Department for International Development
DPAC	Development Partnership Aid Coordination Committee
DTIS	Diagnostic Trade Integration Study
DWH	Data Warehouse (FAO)
ECU	Emergency Coordination Unit
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FAOR	FAO Representative (or Representation)
FAS	Field Accounting System (FAO)
FFS	Farmers Field School
FEC	Forestry and Environmental Commission
FPMIS	FAO Field Programme Management Information System
GCP	FAO Government Cooperative Programme
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoSL	Government of Sierra Leone
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency
HQ	Headquarters
HPAI	Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (Bird flu)
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IVS	Inland Valley Swamp
KAE	Kpeya Agricultural Enterprises, Kenema, Sierra Leone
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
LOA	Letter of Agreement
MAFS	Ministry for Agriculture and Food Security

MAPCO	Movement for Assistance and Promotion of Rural Communities Development
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MFMR	Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources
NMTIP	National Medium-Term Investment Programme
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTI	Ministry of Trade and Industries
NAFSL	National Association of Farmers of Sierra Leone
NCDB	National Cooperative Development Bank
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPP	Net Primary Productivity
NRS	National Recovery Strategy
OCD	Office for Coordination of Normative Operational and Decentralized Activities
ODG	FAO Office of the Director-General
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OFTN	Operation Feed The Nation
PEMSD	Project Evaluation, Monitoring and Statistics Division (MAFS)
PBE	FAO Division of Programme, Budget and Evaluation
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PSA	Personnel Services Agreement
RAF	FAO Regional Office for Africa
RCPRP	Rehabilitation and Community Based Poverty Reduction Project
RFCIP	Rural Finance and Community Improvement Project
RP	FAO Regular Programme
RR	UNDP Resident Representative
SiL/SIL	Sierra Leone
SFLP	Sustainable Fisheries Livelihoods Development Programme
SPFS	Special Programme for Food Security
SSF	Small Scale Facility
TCE	FAO Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation Division
TCI	FAO Investment Centre Division
TCO	FAO Field Operations Division
TCP	FAO Technical Cooperation Programme
TCPR	Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review
TFP	FAO Telefood Programme
UN	United Nations
UNDAF	UN Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNEG	United Nation Evaluation Group
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNHABITAT	UN Human Settlements Programme

UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UNAIDS	The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS.
WARDA	West Africa Rice Development Agency
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation
WTO	World Trade Organisation

Executive Summary

- i. The overall finding is that FAO's cooperation in Sierra Leone during the evaluation period made a valuable contribution to the planning and initiation of agricultural rehabilitation following the period of civil conflict. FAO is considered a trusted partner of the Sierra Leone Government, due to its constant presence through most of the civil conflict period and its responsiveness to the President's rights-based food security pledge of 2002. Strong support was given by FAO Headquarters to a response to the pledge and the FAO Representative, who was in post through almost all of the evaluation period. FAO is considered a valued member of the UN Country Team.
- ii. After the policy and strategy development assistance in planning agricultural sector rehabilitation in Sierra Leone, the focus then turned to implementation. Implementation of agricultural programmes in Sierra Leone is constrained by a number of factors that are discussed in the report. While many donors supported the emergency rehabilitation effort, almost all the post-emergency cooperation funding for FAO projects came from the Federal Republic of Germany. These projects have now ended, or will end by early 2008. Possibilities for programme development in country are limited by the relatively small number of donor interlocutors and, more significantly, by the absence of an FAO Representative since the former one retired in August 2006.
- iii. As Sierra Leone moves progressively into a more normal development mode, FAO will need to define what it can best do and how it can serve the needs of Sierra Leone. It will have to be proactive in asserting this, if it wishes to continue to be considered as a key partner in the country's development.

Context

- iv. Sierra Leone is one of the poorest countries in the world with a ranking of 176 out of 177 countries in the UNDP Human Development Index for 2006. Three-quarters of the population lives in absolute poverty. Rural households headed by farmers have the highest incidence and intensity of poverty, even though the agriculture sector (including livestock and fisheries) currently employs 75% of the country's labour force and accounts for about 45% of GDP. Subsistence bush-fallow cultivation is the predominant type of farming, accounting for about 60% of agricultural output and followed by two-thirds of the farming population.
- v. Domestic agricultural production has increased in recent years and now covers about 69% of the national rice requirement and over 100% for cassava and sweet potato. However, the country still faces a number of critical constraints to increased production including:
 - poor infrastructure
 - general low soil fertility
 - poor understanding of the economic background of production
 - policy unfavourable to local agriculture
- vi. Food security is one of the three pillars of the Government's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). The Agricultural Sector Review prepared by FAO, with

assistance from UNDP, IFAD and the World Bank, was a key contribution to the PRSP. The Government continues to rely heavily on foreign assistance; some 60% of the national budget is supported by development partners, especially DFID, the EC and World Bank. The Government has embarked upon a decentralisation policy, encouraged by donors.

FAO Representation

- vii. The FAO Representation is a medium-sized office. As part of the current reform process in FAO, three administrative posts have been cancelled and a programme post downgraded. Particularly on the programme side, this is incompatible with the increased responsibilities given to FAORs through DGB 2007/04. It raises the likelihood of continued high staff turnover in this unit, the need for continuous staff training at entry level, and consequently a lower level of efficiency than is required to ensure growth in the field programme and its effective management. Savings from the restructuring may neither off-set the cost of constantly replacing trained staff nor repair the damage to the Organisation's image caused by inadequate staffing capacity.
- viii. Only 3% of programme staff time was spent on programme/project identification. This is inadequate to grow the programme beyond its current level. Given the workload already in the programme unit and the increased demands, the evaluation concluded that the FAOR was not adequately resourced.
- ix. During and just after the evaluation period, there were two long periods (10 months and 8 ½ months) when the FAOR post was vacant. These long gaps resulted in: weakened control of the office; overloading of local programme staff; weakened FAO's presence in multi-stakeholder discussions (e.g. UNDAF, DACO); negatively impacted on resource mobilisation initiatives; and created delays in addressing pressing project implementation issues.
- x. Priorities for the office were set as a result of Government requests. However, FAO in Sierra Leone does not have a plan or guide for establishing priorities. Such a tool is essential in a situation where there are many competing needs, scarce resources and donor reluctance to invest in certain areas such as capacity building of the Ministries.
- xi. The FAOR was active with advocacy campaigns in various areas, including within the international community and the UN Country Team. There was less opportunity to work with donors, both because their numbers in Freetown are relatively low and some major donors either do not support agricultural projects or prefer to work through other sources.
- xii. Resource constraints were viewed to be a major problem. For example, funds were not available for project monitoring visits, meaning that the Representation had to rely on written reports. Decisions on budget allocations for the office were made in Rome.
- xiii. Budgetary controls in the office were weak. Systematic monitoring was constrained by the limitations of the Field Accounting System budget module and the limited capacity of the administrative unit to perform this task regularly.

Activities and Results in Areas Supported by FAO

- xiv. FAO enjoys considerable credit for its constant involvement in **emergency rehabilitation** throughout most of the civil war period. FAO began operating emergency rehabilitation projects in the country as early as 1995, while the war was going on. The assistance programme grew after the signing of the Lomé Agreement in July 1999. During the evaluation period, some 18 emergency rehabilitation projects were implemented in Sierra Leone. Aside from the provision of rehabilitation supplies, FAO played a vital role in coordination of the large volume of emergency assistance to Sierra Leone. This assistance was widely acknowledged to have resulted in better targeting of beneficiaries and reducing duplication of efforts. Assessments of FAO emergency assistance in Sierra Leone showed that the quality of local rice seed distributed was often poor and seed was sometimes distributed late. The assistance was appreciated but in many cases the amount of assistance was found to be insufficient to feed the family through the season. Some later emergency rehabilitation activities were pilot initiatives aimed at vulnerable groups. Follow up to some of these has come through Operation Feed the Nation.

- xv. FAO had a key role in **agricultural policy and agricultural development strategy**, because of a desire to respond to the President's food security pledge at the same time that the scope of FAO's Special Programme on Food Security was being broadened. A key output was the Agricultural Sector Review, which was praised for its quality and timeliness by many partners in the country. FAO also supported the establishment of a **Right to Food Secretariat**, although the prospective effectiveness of the Secretariat is in doubt after the cessation of donor funding. A major success, though, was the role played by the Secretariat in the inclusion of food security and agriculture in the PRSP.

- xvi. A considerable success has been FAO's involvement in the introduction and expansion of **Farmers' Field Schools** through **Operation Feed The Nation**. FFS, with funding from various sources including a TCP project and a German Trust Fund, has trained over 36,000 farmers so far. FFS were positively assessed in an impact study carried out for this evaluation, in terms of increased production and incomes, introduction of improved agricultural practices and satisfaction of farmers with their participation. The study also pointed out areas needing to be addressed in future, such as storage and marketing.

- xvii. The largest single intervention funded by FAO in the evaluation period was a project for the development of a sustainable **Seeds** programme. The evaluation found that in less than two years, the project had made considerable progress in improving coordination in the seed sector and increasing capacity for seed production and dissemination. Although the project has been successful in a technical sense, it is not yet operating on a cost-recovery basis. The evaluation recommends putting the project on a sound business footing to ensure sustainability and address operational issues. If this is done, an extension of the project was recommended.

- xviii. A German-funded regional project in which Sierra Leone participates promotes opportunities for **organic and fair trade** certification for agricultural products in West African countries; cocoa in the case of Sierra Leone. The main issues are whether the cooperative working with the project can purchase its own members' crops against competition from cocoa traders and if its management can develop the skills and trust to service the members effectively. Assuming this happens, the project could serve as a model for other organisations in Sierra Leone also seeking fair trade and organic certification.
- xix. An evaluation of **Telefood** projects was undertaken because of the large number of such projects (27 during the evaluation period) and to augment the evidence base with respect to the conclusions of the corporate evaluation of Telefood undertaken in 2005. This evaluation found some successful projects, but the sustainability of the projects was generally low and those with livestock components were particularly unsuccessful. Projects tended to operate in isolation and did not benefit from strategic linkages with other FAO programmes, other international development partners or with the government; thus they were not part of broader efforts for poverty eradication. The absence of technical support was one of the main causes of project failure. Due to absence of resources, project monitoring and follow-up were carried out neither by FAO nor by any other partner or agency. The evaluation validated the recommendation of the corporate evaluation that Telefood funds should support clearly identified components of wider FAO projects and programmes, where they can be better targeted and monitored. In the case of Sierra Leone, the evaluation recommended that Telefood projects be linked to FFS and FFS District Networks, in order to have better access to capacity building and advice.
- xx. The evaluation examined eight **Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP)** funded projects implemented over the review period. Overall performance of the TCP in Sierra Leone over the review period is judged to be above satisfactory, with a mixture of good projects, poor ones and some that could not be adequately assessed in the absence of key information. The use of TCP in the Agricultural Sector Review was particularly strategic, as without it, FAO would have been unable to play the leading role that it did in its implementation. Using TCP for "buy-in" to key national policy-making processes is extremely effective and the TCP Unit should be prepared to respond to such requests, if technically sound, in a rapid fashion. Efforts in the medium-term should be focused on developing sound technical proposals in close consultation with potential funders and thus a higher likelihood of follow-up.
- xxi. In terms of **cross-cutting issues**, the evaluation found that FAO has a stronger role to play in terms of **environmental protection** in Sierra Leone and has identified this as a priority area for the future, because of the strong linkage to soil fertility and consequent agricultural production and food security. FFS should be the key mechanism for delivering messages at field level in this area. The evaluation identified a need for FAO to play a stronger role in terms of promoting **gender equity**. Utilising concepts developed by FAO Headquarters and with technical support from UNAIDS, the evaluation found scope for establishing a workplace policy for FAO staff, incorporating

HIV/AIDS mainstreaming and for including modules on HIV/AIDS within FFS in particular.

Results by FAO Services

- xxii. **Sharing and applying knowledge** was assessed through FAO's pilot activities and use of Regular Programme information and products. The pilot activities were few: the FFS were deemed successful as was an initiative to increase rice seed production through an emergency project while the Right-to-Food project was not considered successful. Little use is made of FAO information and products in Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone does participate in meetings and seminars and these are useful for keeping abreast of latest technical developments. However, due to poor Internet connectivity and lack of knowledge in the FAO Representation about what is available, little use is made of information products.

- xxiii. FAO engages in **partnership building** with the Government, members of the UN family, donors, NGOs and civil society organisations. FAO is considered to be a trusted partner by the Government and the Representation has built linkages, including with the most senior decision-makers. FAO, thus, enjoys a high profile in the country, perhaps higher than in most countries.

- xxiv. **Capacity building** in Sierra Leone is particularly challenging. Within the UN system and among donors and NGOs, lack of capacity is universally cited as an obstacle to sustainable development interventions. While nearly all FAO interventions (except Telefood projects) have a capacity building component, they are invariably small, often of too short duration and thus have only limited impact. As FAO is not a funding agency, its possibilities for carrying out extensive capacity building will always be constrained. Accordingly, it may be able to make a greater impact through assessments of capacity building needs in particular areas and make this information available to Government and Development Partners. Such assessments should take into account capacities outside of government.

- xxv. In terms of **resource mobilization**, FAO was not notably successful. Despite the Presidential pledge, the Maputo Declaration, the goals of the PRSP and the agricultural and food security strategies developed, the amounts of national and international resources directed to agriculture have remained below expectations. Government resources for agriculture, although increased over the evaluation period, remain less than half the Maputo Declaration target. The major donors in the country have given emphasis to sectors other than agriculture and investment projects in agriculture, even when identified, have been very slow to come on line. There have not been any sector-wide programmes, so projects remain the form for international assistance. The relative lack of donors present in the country is also a difficulty.

Recommendations

- xxvi. The evaluation made 12 recommendations, eight of which are general, three relate to specific programme areas and one to Telefood. The general recommendations covered the following areas:

- Developing a framework for FAO support to Sierra Leone;
- Continuing advocacy for food security issues;
- Continuing assistance in agricultural policy and strategy formulation and linking this to resource mobilization;
- Provision of agricultural policy and training support aimed at elucidating better understanding of the economic background of production and promoting agriculture as a profitable business;
- Provision of policy support aimed at sustainable agriculture;
- Ensuring adequate capacity in the FAO Representation;
- Provision of continued technical support for the development of Farmers' Field Schools; and
- Specific consideration of cross-cutting issues (in particular environment, gender equity and HIV/AIDS) in future support.

Introduction

1. At its May 2005 session, the FAO Programme Committee recommended that FAO should undertake “an evaluation drawing conclusions on the basis of evaluations of the totality of FAO’s work in individual countries”. Country evaluations respond to General Assembly Resolution 59/250 of 2004 on the *Triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (TCPR)*. The resolution stressed (a) that the operational activities for development of the United Nations system should be valued and assessed on the basis of their impact on the recipient countries as contributions to their capacity to pursue poverty eradication, sustained economic growth and sustainable development; and (b) that an important element of the TCPR is the overall assessment of the effectiveness of the operational activities for development of the United Nations system and its functioning at the country level.
2. FAO conducted its first country evaluation in 2005-06, in Mozambique. As that evaluation was being brought to completion, representatives of the FAO Evaluation Service were involved in discussions of country evaluation with the UN Evaluation Group, whose membership is drawn from evaluation departments of the UN and specialized agencies. UNEG had also decided to embark on country evaluations covering the entirety of UN support to individual countries. FAO’s criteria for its first round of country evaluation included that selected countries should be LDCs, given their importance to the ultimate realisation of the MDGs and MDG 1 in particular. UNEG had identified Sierra Leone as a country of interest for a UN-wide country evaluation, to be undertaken after an initial exercise in South Africa. Because of the high level of food insecurity and its recent emergence from a conflict situation, FAO decided to select Sierra Leone for its second country evaluation, with a view towards drawing lessons from this evaluation as a major contribution to the UN-wide exercise to follow. Sierra Leone was also deemed to be of particular interest because of the considerable involvement of FAO in high-level policy discussion and decision-making during the evaluation period.
3. The main purposes of the evaluation were:
 - to improve the relevance, design, implementation and results of FAO activities in Sierra Leone;
 - to learn lessons about the factors affecting the relevance and development impact of FAO cooperation at country level;
 - to provide accountability to FAO member countries and answer questions about FAO performance at country level;
 - to contribute to a UN system-wide evaluation in Sierra Leone;
 - to form a case study for a meta-evaluation of FAO country level effectiveness for completion in 2008;
 - to contribute to development of the methodology for carrying out evaluations at country level in the future.

4. The evaluation was to be forward-looking, i.e. to identify areas for improvement and draw lessons in order to further FAO cooperation relevance and effectiveness in the future. It was also to assist the Government and partners in Sierra Leone in maximising the comparative advantage of FAO.

1. Approach and Team Members

5. The evaluation took place in three phases, beginning with an inception mission by the FAO Evaluation Service in July 2006. The inception mission involved research into the activities that had been carried out in Sierra Leone over the preceding five years, interviews with FAO Headquarters staff that had been dealing with Sierra Leone matters and a one-week visit to the country by a Senior Evaluation Officer/Evaluation Manager and a consultant. During the visit, the team met with senior Government officials, donor representatives, NGOs and FAO staff, with a view toward gathering information about FAO's cooperation activities and preparing subsequent stages of the evaluation.
6. The second phase of the evaluation revolved largely around the conduct of the impact studies on Farmers' Field Schools and FAO emergency interventions, finalisation of terms of reference for the evaluation, putting together the evaluation team and assembling all relevant background information for the evaluation. The impact studies on Farmers' Field Schools and emergency interventions with FAO support are found as Annex 6 to this report.
7. The third and final phase consisted of the three-week final evaluation mission, with a team composed of international and national team members. Some members of the team spent two days in Accra for briefing by the FAO Regional Office for Africa and the majority of the team was 15 days in Sierra Leone (February 6 to 23, 2007), including one week spent at sites in all Provinces of the country visiting field interventions.
8. The largest bilateral donor in the evaluation period to FAO was the Federal Republic of Germany. For this reason and due to their keen interest in this country evaluation, Germany kindly agreed to fund the Team Leader as well as the Human Rights Specialist.
9. The entire evaluation team was:
 - Mr Klaus Pilgram** (Germany) – Independent consultant/Team Leader and Policy Specialist
 - Mr Robert Moore** (USA) – FAO Evaluation Service, Rome, Evaluation Manager (TCP and emergency projects)
 - Mr Peter Schröder** (Germany) – Independent consultant/Agronomist
 - Mr Sahr N. Fomba** (Sierra Leone) – Agronomist/Agricultural research (nominated by Government of Sierra Leone)
 - Ms Marjorie Smith-John** (Jamaica) – Office of the FAO Inspector-General, RAF-Accra - Management Specialist
 - Ms Monika Lüke** (Germany) – Independent consultant/Human Rights Specialist
 - Ms Luisa Belli** (Italy) – FAO consultant/Telefood evaluator

Mr S. Richard Senesie (Sierra Leone) – Independent consultant/Telefood evaluator

10. The Sierra Leonean team for the impact studies was:
 - Ms Catherine Sandy-Margao – Supervisor
 - Mr Daniel S. Fornah and Mr S. Richard Senesie – Lead Enumerators
 - Ms Finda Jenkins, Ms Francess Nyuma, Mr Thomas Bangura, Ms Ima Lahai, Ms Bintu Moseray, Mr Mohamed Carankay - Enumerators
11. The **evaluation main report (Vol. I)** begins (Chapter 2) with a description of the agricultural sector in Sierra Leone, information about donor assistance to the country and a profile of FAO's cooperation during the evaluation period. This is followed (Chapter 3) by a description and analysis of how FAO works in Sierra Leone, with emphasis on the FAO Representation. Chapter 4 examines the results of major areas supported by FAO over the evaluation period, while Chapter 5 looks at the performance of FAO services across sectors. The mission's conclusions and recommendations are in Chapter 6.
12. Included in **Vol. II: Annexes** are, besides the Terms of Reference (1), evaluation reports of two specific projects (Seeds (2) and Right-to-Food (3) that were mandated in the evaluation TOR, along with reviews of TCP (4) and TeleFood projects (5) that were also requested. Annex 6 includes the impact studies that were undertaken on Farmers' Field Schools and emergency interventions. Vol. II is completed by the List of Projects Reviewed (7) and the List of Persons Contacted (8).

2. The National Context

2.1. *Agricultural Sector and Food Security in Sierra Leone*

13. Sierra Leone is one of the poorest countries in the world with a ranking of 176 out of 177 countries in the UNDP Human Development Index for 2006 and is classified as a low-income food deficit country. Annual per capita income is below US\$ 175. Seventy-five percent of the population lives in absolute poverty. The 2000 Baseline Service Delivery Survey reported that between 78% and 90% of the rural population do not have access to potable drinking water and the percentage having adequate sanitation is as low as 5%. Sierra Leone's social indicators are worse than those of other countries at a similar level of per capita income. Average life expectancy is 38 years, infant mortality is 147 per 1,000 and illiteracy rate is 81%. Daily calorie supply per capita is below 1,800, which is far below the requirement of 2,600 calories per day. On a more positive note, Sierra Leone is endowed with substantial mineral wealth (diamond, gold, bauxite, rutile, and iron ore), a varied agricultural resource base and rich fisheries.
14. After decades of poor governance and neglect of rural areas, an armed rebellion broke out in 1991 when regional actors sought to control the diamond fields in Sierra Leone and the rest of the Mano River Basin. The social and economic effects of the war were devastating with over 20,000 people killed, thousands injured or maimed and thousands more suffered from post-traumatic stress. Over two million people were displaced, 500,000 of whom fled to neighbouring countries. Infrastructure, businesses and much of the housing stock were ruined.
15. With the end of the civil war and beginning in 2002, the Government of Sierra Leone tackled the national recovery and reconstruction process in collaboration with its development partners through a two-pronged approach: (a) the National Recovery Strategy (NRS) and (b) the Poverty-Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), beginning with an Interim PRSP in 2002-03. The objective of the NRS was to create the conditions that would consolidate peace and lay foundations for longer-term development. There were three principal elements to the recovery process: (i) **the Government and its executive functions:** a programme for good governance was developed, including enhanced financial management, institutional reform and reformed government procurement procedures, anti-corruption measures, decentralization and reactivation of local administration; (ii) **civil society:** building capacity of community groups and civil-society organisations; and (iii) **the economy and related infrastructure:** the restoration of agriculture and other economic activities in rural areas.
16. **Rural Poverty:** The national poverty profile of Sierra Leone reveals that rural households headed by farmers have the highest incidence (83%) and the highest intensity of poverty, even though the agriculture sector (including livestock and fisheries) currently employs 75% of the country's labour force and presently accounts for about 45% of the GDP. Virtually all of Sierra Leone's agriculture is in the hands of

- small scale farmers using minimal modern techniques, and they are amongst the poorest members of the population.
17. The total land area of Sierra Leone is estimated at 72,326 km² of which 5.36 million ha or 74% of the territory is cultivable land, divided into uplands of 60,650 km² (80% of the total), which is of relatively low fertility; and lowlands of 11,650 km² (20%). In the rainy season (May – October) precipitation ranges from 2000mm in the north to 4000mm in the south east. Surface water is abundant, supplied by nine major and three minor river basins. More than 95% of the original dense forest has been cleared, and much of the cleared area is now degraded to poor savannah woodland.
 18. **HIV/AIDS:** The first HIV/AIDS case was reported in Sierra Leone in 1986. According to a 2005 survey, a national sero-prevalence rate of 1.53% was established and did not differ significantly between males and females. The highest prevalence among women occurred in the 20-24 year age group (2.0%) whereas males between 35-39 years had the highest prevalence (3.5%). Prevalence in urban areas was 2.1% as compared to 1.3% in rural areas except Koinadugu District (3.5%), a border district where mining is the dominating sector.
 19. **Gender Issues:** Women account for about 51% of the total population, and contribute to providing most household food requirements. However, they are marginalized in society and lack access to productive assets, including land, credit, training, and technology. They, however, are entrepreneurial and practice food production, processing and petty trading to earn income. Illiteracy rates among women are higher (>80%), due to lower school enrolment rates, family labour requirements and teenage pregnancies. A significant proportion of household heads are women whose husbands were killed during the civil war. In agriculture, there are few women extension workers even though the bulk of farm labour is provided by women and children (>80%).
 20. During the civil conflict, women and children suffered the most in respect of sexual assault, stress and the psychological strain unwanted pregnancies, and increased vulnerability to trauma and depression. The civil strife has left behind thousands of children in extremely difficult circumstances, as they were conscripted to swell the ranks of the various armed factions during that period.

2.1.1. Agriculture

21. About 600,000 ha of the land is cropped annually by about 400,000 farm families. The combination of customary and statutory land laws has permitted the coexistence of traditional farming with the establishment of large plantations, as well as the development of swamps and forests. Subsistence bush-fallow cultivation is the predominant type of farming, with smallholdings usually ranging from 0.5 to 2.0 ha under food crops. Up to 15 different crops are traditionally grown in mixed stands in one season, rainfed upland rice dominating. This type of farming accounts for about 60% of agricultural output and employs two-thirds of the farming population. Reduced fallow periods and increasingly frequent bushfires have caused widespread soil

- degradation and reduced yields. Sustainable production will require a switch from shifting to more productive and intensive settled agriculture, through swamp reclamation and development of small irrigation schemes. The uplands could be used for permanent tree crop plantations such as oil palm, cashew, citrus and mango in the northern region. Cocoa, coffee, rubber, kola nuts and oil palm are grown in the southeast of the country. The majority of farmers cultivate rice as the main crop, although tuber crops such as cassava and sweet potatoes, and cereals such as millet and maize, are gaining ground.
22. Agricultural production was adversely affected by unfavourable macroeconomic policies during the 1980s and by the civil war in the following decade, with rice production declining by 65%. Over 90% of the cattle were either killed or transferred to neighbouring countries.
 23. **Tree crops** constitute the bulk of agricultural exports and the source of domestic palm oil for consumption. The main tree crops are coffee, cocoa, kola nuts and oil palm, followed by rubber and cashew. Present yields are low due to lack of maintenance and renewal, but this could also qualify them for organic products and fair trade consideration (see chapter 4.6).
 24. **Livestock** is run mainly by semi-nomadic herders. In the wet season, the herds are grazed in the bush and other uncultivated uplands; and in the dry season on harvest residues, in swamps and *bolilands* (naturally grassy drainage depressions). Birth rates are low (45%), mortality is high and off-take is only 7%, due mainly to feed deficiencies and uncontrolled parasites and diseases. Poultry is the most numerous and widely owned form of livestock. However, a scare of avian flu has negatively affected this industry countrywide. Pigs are not widely owned, and generally found around urban centres.
 25. **Trade in Agricultural Produce** has been going on since colonial times and was the one of the major sources of foreign exchange earnings prior to the civil war. Sierra Leone, being a member of WTO, benefits from the Integrated Framework for Trade Related Technical Assistance to Least Developed Countries. Government has removed all barriers to trade and gives concessionary tariff for the importation of farm machinery and inputs (5% import duty). Phytosanitary and plant quarantine regulations exist in principle but need strengthening for proper functioning. Imported rice is freely available in the cities and big towns across the country to the detriment of local production.
 26. **Potential for Development:** Given its generally favourable resource endowment, the country's potential for agricultural development has yet to be realized. The vast water resources have yet to be tapped for irrigated agriculture, both large and small scale. The country's favourable climate allows for cultivation of a wide range of annual food crops and tree crops for export. An average rainfall of about 3,000 mm, distributed over a six-month period, makes it possible to grow a second crop in many parts of the country, such as inland valley swamps with sufficient catchment areas.

Constraints to Increased Agricultural Productivity:

27. Total domestic production of the main staple food crop, rice, has reached some 69% of the current requirement, while that of cassava and sweet potato have surpassed 100%. While it is hoped that production of all major crops will grow steadily as resettlement and rehabilitation efforts are completed, it is also recognized that increasing food production depends on removing significant constraints like:
- poor infrastructure
 - general low soil fertility
 - poor understanding of the economic background of production
 - policy unfavourable to local agriculture

Infrastructure

28. Little investment is taking place in productive ventures in rural communities. The resources made available to these communities are largely used to satisfy basic consumption requirements. Feeder roads, transport, energy, water supply and markets need attention to make the rural areas more attractive and productive. Post-harvest losses are high (estimated currently at 15-40%). Poor infrastructure hinders transport from the villages to markets in the cities up-country and to Freetown. Any marketable surplus therefore is charged with extremely high cost of transport.

Low soil fertility

29. Sierra Leonean soils are mostly ferralite in origin and have developed under continuous high temperatures throughout the year, with constant leaching due to heavy rainfall, high rates of runoff and rapid infiltration of water to the lower horizons. Thus, they lack any mineral nutrient reserves, the only nutrients readily available being those held in the organic matter. Most soils are, therefore, of inherently low fertility.
30. Under natural forest, nutrients are lost when there is extraction of timber or removal of plant parts for food. Otherwise, nutrients are recycled continuously through the trees. Removal of bush and forest cover, e.g. for charcoal production which is the only cash-providing activity for many rural Sierra Leoneans, destroys this cycle and leads to rapid degradation of the soil. As a result, yields are very low. The average yields for rice in the upland is around 0.75 t/ha (range within the districts: 0.60 – 0.85) for low lands 1.45 t/ha (1.01 – 1.88)¹, for cassava around 5 t/ha, for maize about 1 t/ha, for groundnuts 1.5 t/ha.
31. Bush fallows also interrupt the cycle. When shrubs are burnt, all the accumulated nitrogen and much of the sulphur are lost to the atmosphere. Phosphorus, bases and some micronutrients are retained in the burnt ash but this is subject to wind and water erosion if preventive steps are not taken. Other nutrients are held in the soil and surface organic matter but most are used by the first flush of weeds and rapid mineralization on exposure of organic matter leads to further nutrient loss.

¹ MAFS - PEMSD, 2004

32. Soils of the inland valley swamps benefit to some extent from the nutrient losses from the upland areas. The traditional method of fallowing swamps results in losses of nutrients additional to those occurring naturally through leaching through the movement of the water downstream towards the sea. The long term potential for these areas is thus only marginally better than that of the upland areas.
33. Soil fertility together with the availability of water is the factor limiting the yield of crops. Soil fertility is better conserved in cocoa, coffee and oil palm plantations, mainly found in the east of the country, due to the permanent vegetative cover. With the exception of mangrove soils at the estuaries of the rivers where rice can be grown without a fallow period every year, all other ecologies, both upland and lowland, are endangered when they are continuously cropped as they are at present.
34. Tillage of the soils, especially with mechanised power tillers leads to a rapid depletion of soil nutrients due to high decomposition of the organic matter and to fast mineralization of clay, with the formerly stored plant nutrients. The fallow period of only a few years in the uplands is too short to restore soil fertility to its original level. A minimum fallow period, which is 10 – 20 years in the uplands, can hardly be observed any more. Shortened fallow periods are now also followed for the bolilands, the inland valley swamps and riverrain grassland, with negative consequences for productivity. The prospects for the lowlands are better only for the mangrove areas. However, there is presently low utilization of mangroves due to salinity, the absence of water control or a combination thereof.
35. The term of 'arable' or 'cultivable' land implies that reserves are available for further expansion. However, the high figure given is a fallacy in Sierra Leone, especially for the upland areas that constitute 80% of the cropped area. According to available data, some 6.5 % of the arable land of the upland area is cultivated. With the bush fallow system, this is already at the limit of what can be supported under current cropping regimes. There is a necessity to explore alternatives. Examples might include hedgerow farming with improved fallow using auxiliary plants like pigeon peas and other legumes, though it is a tedious and long-time investment.
36. Thus, the evaluation considers that any increase in yield performance will depend on the conservation and improvement of the production of biomass and its management, leading towards the improvement of soil fertility. Improved soil fertility will make the labour factor more efficient. Since the incremental labour demand is rather low the returns to labour increase as well.
37. Purchased farm inputs like certified seed will only become profitable if a higher yield level as compared to the present one can be achieved. This requires the application of improved management practices by farmers. The same holds for the use of fertiliser. Fertiliser use will only be profitable once the limiting factors causing low soil fertility have been addressed.

Poor understanding of the economics of production

38. A key problem is that the economics of production and marketing are neither well known nor understood. Low institutional and human resource capacities and the restricted thinking in economic terms, partly influenced by relief aid/donations also work against the realisation of the country's agricultural potential. The analysis of the productivity of various enterprises inside or outside farming is a precondition for any investment decision in order to have the maximum benefit and profit.
39. The agricultural sector is at present characterized by subsistence production. As shown above, possibilities of increasing the area cropped are very limited. For the individual farmer, labour is also a limiting factor. Mechanisation is often mentioned as part of the solution, but it is generally uneconomic given the present low yield levels both in the uplands and lowlands. Apart from the fact that the cost of fertiliser is increasing faster than farmgate prices, the use of chemical fertiliser will be profitable only when there is sufficient organic matter in the soil (see above). In Sierra Leone, fertiliser investments are presently only profitable for intensive production of vegetables.
40. For the majority of smallholders, potential for development depends on investing in the improvement of farm enterprises through an optimized factor allocation, in his cropping cycles as well as in animal production. By generally improving the quality of production and processing, storage and marketing facilities, farmers have the option of higher yields, higher proceeds, and increased profit.
41. The question is whether the farmer or the entrepreneur is able to use inputs profitably. The key to agricultural modernisation is the formulation – in response to farmers' demand – of a menu of low-cost measures for agronomic and economic improvements that are within the management and husbandry capabilities of the farmers and do not place his family at a risk. The challenge is to develop these solutions, keeping in mind farmers' economic possibilities. There is no other way; agriculture must be seen as a business.

Policy unfavourable to local agriculture

42. The goal of increased local production of staple food is at odds with another goal, to keep the price of staple food low, especially in Freetown and other cities where an increased percentage of the population has moved during the war. However, for farmers to intensify their labour and make investments in farm inputs, they need higher prices. Nearly all people in Freetown buy low-grade imported rice, because it is much cheaper than the locally produced. Locally produced rice could fetch a premium, because of its freshness, its better taste and because it is more nutritive (mainly not polished, therefore a higher protein content). However, the vast majority of customers purchase the lower-cost, imported rice. Under the present price relationship between domestic and imported rice, for the average rice farmer there is no price incentive to invest in more intensive rice production.
43. Another constraint is lack of access to rural financial services. Although there are six commercial banks in the country, they do not lend to the agricultural sector in general

and small farmers in particular. Their lending operations are focused on larger corporations. The two existing development banks, the National Development Bank (NDB) and National Cooperative Development Bank (NCDB), previously provided loans in the rural areas but all their branches were closed during the war and they are yet to resume business. Numerous NGOs now operate their own credit programmes, practically in a policy void. The Government is working to redress this issue through World Bank support to the private sector and farmers and infrastructure.

2.1.2. Fisheries

44. Sierra Leone has an extensive coastline relative to its size and thus has access to vast fishing areas with considerable resources. Fisheries are therefore an important sector of the national economy and contribute significantly to protein intake. Marine fisheries represent more than 80% of the country's total production of fish and fish products. The fishery sector accounts for 21% of the GDP with substantial foreign exchange earnings. About 20,000 people are directly involved in fishing and the harvesting of other marine food sources, and women particularly benefit from fisheries through their involvement in fish processing and marketing. Increasing the supply of fish to the domestic market and for export can be achieved through support to people engaged in artisanal fisheries and aquaculture with inputs and skills for processing.
45. Fisheries are predominantly artisanal and foreign fleets mainly engage in (uncontrolled) industrial fishing. Aquaculture is not significant, but more emphasis is now being placed on production from fish farming in the hinterlands. Prior to the civil war, the total annual catch was estimated at 65,000 mt, with artisanal fishing catches accounting for up to 70%.

2.1.3. Forestry and Environmental Issues

46. Forestry and environmental issues faced by Sierra Leone include land degradation caused particularly by agriculture and mining; cattle grazing; recurrent bush fires; population pressure; deforestation due to an increased demand for agricultural land and urban requirements for timber and fuelwood; loss of biodiversity; and pollution of fresh water resources due to mining and municipal waste. Moreover, the civil war had an adverse impact on the environment because of the destruction of water resources and uncontrolled mining. The Government enacted a National Environment Protection Act in 2004.
47. Fuelwood and charcoal production provide complementary income to most farmers but the need for replanting trees cannot be overemphasized. Logging is of little economic significance at national level but has a negative impact on the remaining forest reserves.
48. Due to the marginalisation of forestry and environmental issues in the past, the Government created an independent body, the Forestry and Environment Commission (FEC) in 2005. However, the necessary legislation is only now being prepared for

submission to Parliament for enactment. The need to harmonize the legislation under various ministries such as Mining, Lands and Country Planning and Housing into the Commission's portfolio is a key task. The responsibilities of the Commission cover 44 Protected Areas but due to limitations of funding only eight representative sites will be managed initially.

2.1.4. Food Security

49. In his inaugural address on the 19th May 2002 for the second term of office as President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, HE Alhaji Dr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah declared food security as his government's main objective and pledged that by the end of 2007 when his term of office ended, no Sierra Leonean would go to bed hungry. Towards this end, MAFS has developed a policy intent document (see section 4.3). The "Interim Statement of Policy for the Agriculture Sector in Sierra Leone, October 2002" seeks to improve agricultural production and productivity in order to achieve food security, by providing the enabling environment for farmers and promoting appropriate research, extension, input delivery and market systems thereby improving rural incomes, reducing poverty and maintaining the natural environment.
50. As part of the preparation of the September 2004 Food Security Strategy for Sierra Leone, a survey was undertaken of 1700 households in 145 villages (in 13 administrative districts) to determine the level of food security in the country. It classified families by their level of food security into categories, ranging from chronically food insecure to food secure. The results were as follows:
 - Chronically food insecure: 28%
 - Households with varying degrees of food insecurity, largely seasonal: 64%
 - Food secure: 8%.
51. The highest levels of chronic food insecurity were found in Kambia, Koinadugu and Bonthe Districts (44-51%), while Port Loko, Bombali and Bo had the lowest incidences (15-16%). The survey classified the food security status of Sierra Leone as follows:
 - Good food availability, accessibility and utilisation: Rural Western Area and Port Loko District;
 - Relatively good food availability and accessibility but poor food utilisation (usually due to problems of health and hygiene): Moyamba and Bo Districts;
 - Borderline-poor food access and availability; chronic malnutrition due to poor utilisation: Bombali and Kenema Districts;
 - Poor food availability and accessibility, utilisation seasonally problematic: Kambia and Pujehun Districts;
 - Poor food availability and accessibility with below-standard utilisation: Kono and Kailahun Districts;
 - Very poor food availability and accessibility, poor utilisation: Koinadugu, Bonthe and Tonkolili Districts.
52. In Sierra Leone, many people equate food security with having rice. When referring to degree of fulfillment of the Presidential pledge, authorities usually take rice self-

sufficiency as a proxy for food security. Food crop surveys conducted by MAFS, FAO, WFP, etc. indicated that domestic rice production met around 69% of the national requirement in 2006. Even though the President's pledge will not come into fruition by the end of 2007, considerable progress will have been made towards that end.

2.2. Donor Assistance to Sierra Leone in Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry, and Food Security

53. Since the end of the civil war in 2002, Sierra Leone has been dependent on the goodwill of its international development partners such as DFID, the EC and World Bank which support over 60% of the national budget while the country is recuperating from the effects of the war.
54. The GoSL has sought assistance from several development partners, including FAO, to develop a coherent strategy for agricultural development and poverty alleviation. The current PRSP, which was presented and approved by a conference of donors, the Consultative Group (CG) Meeting in November 2005 in London, included agriculture and food security as Pillar II. The second PRSP is now in preparation, to be submitted to the development partners in 2008. The PRSP is the Government's main strategy for the short to medium term programs towards attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015.
55. The Agricultural Sector Review co-sponsored by the FAO, World Bank, UNDP and IFAD, was completed in 2003 and published in 2004 and formed the basis for the PRSP of 2005, which is now being implemented through various operational programmes or strategies such as Operation Feed the Nation. Several other donor-funded projects such as the Multinational NERICA Dissemination Project, IFAD and ADB projects covering seven districts are ongoing in the agriculture sector. The World Bank is about to embark on a large project to assist the private sector in Sierra Leone, including farmers and also to develop infrastructure, especially energy.
56. Like Rwanda, Sierra Leone is recipient of UN post-conflict assistance (UNIOSIL). The FAO, together with WFP, some donor agencies (USAID) and many international NGOs was a major player in these emergency activities.
57. The Government's decentralisation policy, encouraged by donors, is also driving additional changes in the aid environment. DFID and World Bank are already making substantial input into local councils' budgets. However, a great deal of capacity building is needed in order to effectively use the additional resources. The central Government is helping actively in this respect by devolving key staff to these local councils along with their budgetary support, starting with the Health and Sanitation, Agriculture and Food Security, Education, Science and Technology ministries, in the first instance. A national aid coordination body, DACO has already been established with the main task of designing, planning and monitoring the PRSP implementation. Since the beginning

of 2007, DACO has fielded personnel to all district councils in the country to facilitate data gathering and dissemination and coordination on this issue.

58. The Sierra Leone Diagnostic Trade Integration Study (DTIS), prepared under the Integrated Framework (IF) for Trade Related Technical Assistance to Least Developed Countries (LDCs), is a multi-agency, multi-donor programme initiated by the WTO Trade Ministers in 1996 to promote integration of LDCs into the global economy, the objective being to make trade integration serve the LDCs' poverty reduction and national development strategies. The Sierra Leone DTIS and its Action Matrix were validated at a workshop held in Freetown from 24-26 October 2006 and submitted to Cabinet in early November 2006. Both documents have been endorsed by cabinet paving the way for implementation of the Action Matrix.

3. FAO Representation in Sierra Leone

59. The evaluation examined the capacity of the Representation (FAOR) to implement FAO's mandate in Sierra Leone and assessed the quality of programme management. As the FAOR is the real face of the Organization in a country, it is important to assess the role it plays as part of an overall judgement of performance.

3.1. FAOR in the Evaluation Period

60. For purposes of this review, the operational field programme can be divided into two periods, the emergency rehabilitation phase from 2001-2003, and the reconstruction phase from 2003-2006.
61. During the emergency period, practically all projects were rehabilitation activities. TCE had budget holder responsibilities and project implementation was through the Emergency Coordination Unit (ECU), supervised by an Emergency Coordinator and the FAO Representative. The FAOR acted as paying agent as well as providing administrative support to the ECU activities. In return, it received financial support from the emergency programme since both offices were co-located from 2003 which greatly assisted in reducing operating costs. The major expenditures were for fuel and office rental.
62. In line with the decentralization of project responsibilities to FAORs in 2001, the FAOR/SiL assumed full operational responsibility for all non-emergency country projects from 2004 onwards. With the exception of the German-funded seed multiplication project that had an international CTA, all projects were managed by national coordinators under the supervision of the FAOR. This resulted in a significant shift in the nature and magnitude of the Representation's workload from mainly liaison and administrative support for emergency interventions, to project operations, along with increased advocacy on food security issues and resource mobilization.
63. This new focus severely stretched the limited capacity in the Representation to adequately support these functions. The project operations capacity was partially augmented through increased use of national consultants and project coordinators in implementing projects and supporting visiting missions where necessary. However, some liaison type activities which are heavily time consuming could not be delegated, such as participation in UN thematic groups, donor/Government coordination meetings, and resource mobilization.
64. To enable the Representation to respond to requests from Government and to assist in fulfilling their mandate, the FAOR requested support from Headquarters and the Regional office to carry out sector/sub-sector assessments, project formulation and provide policy advice. While these activities fully reflected governments' priorities, delays in response from Headquarters and the Regional offices hampered the

Representation's timely participation in joint activities with Government and donor partners.

65. The Representation used approximately \$86,000 of TCP and SSF² resources through eight interventions during the review period. This was found to be effective in facilitating a quick start-up for agreed activities, e.g. Tree Crop Assessment, as well as in underpinning its contributions to the UNCT thematic groups. However, the long process involved in accessing the TCP facility acts as a deterrent when the size of the funds is considered. With the increased allotment of \$200,000 for the biennium, the evaluation believes that the procedures to access these funds should be reviewed to facilitate easier access.
66. The current field programme consists of four national projects (excluding Telefood) with a 2007 available budget of \$510,807³. The pipeline consists of six proposals, three of which have been listed for the last three years without attracting donor support.

FAO Office Profile

67. The Sierra Leone Representation is a medium⁴ sized office consisting of nine Regular Programme funded posts. In addition to the Representative's post, the programme unit is comprised of two posts and the administration unit has the remaining six posts. This is augmented with three temporary staff paid through the RP allocation for security and AOS, i.e one driver, a radio operator and an administrative clerk. The impact of the current reform is that three posts in the administration unit⁵ have been cancelled and replaced by the Assistant FAOR (Administration) post, while the programme assistant's post (G6) was downgraded to programme clerk (G4) with corresponding changes in the job description.
68. The evaluation found that staff turnover in the programme unit during the review period was relatively high. The disparity in grades and responsibilities between FAO and other UN Agencies meant that FAO was unable to attract or keep the better qualified candidates and therefore had to invest heavily in training, only to lose staff to other Institutions. Requests to OCD to up-grade the Assistant FAOR(Programme) to National Officer-B level were not successful and there is an attendant risk of losing the Officer to other Agencies/NGOs. The EC and UNDP commented on the rapid staff turnover in FAO and the negative impact this had on programme delivery and effective participation in UNCT thematic meetings and donor coordination fora.
69. DGB 2007/04 indicates that '...the responsibility for managing the project cycle for national projects, including liaison with local donor representatives and funding sources, lies with the FAORs.'. FAO Representatives therefore have greater lead

² FAOR's Small Scale Facility

³ FPMIS information as at 20/03/07

⁴ Classification used in the OCD's November 2003 desk review '*An Assessment of the Functions and Resources of the FAO Representations*'.

⁵ Administrative Officer, Administrative Assistant and Receptionist

responsibility for managing the project cycle from project formulation, through implementation to closure.

70. The requirements of DGB 2007/04⁶ imply the need to strengthen the programme unit to ensure adequate capacity for the Representative to fulfil the new obligations. However the new staffing profile does not provide the necessary support. The decision to downgrade the Programme Assistant's post implies that the current level of field programme development is too low to warrant more senior staff. However, this approach does not recognize the level and volume of work undertaken by the programme unit. It raises the likelihood of continued high staff turnover in this unit, the need for continuous staff training at entry level, and consequently a lower level of efficiency than is required to ensure growth in the field programme and its effective management. In addition, savings from the restructuring may neither off-set the cost of constantly replacing trained staff nor repair the damage to the Organisation's image caused by inadequate staffing capacity. OCD and the new Representative should review the staffing profile to ensure the programme unit is adequately resourced.

Workload Assessment

71. The 2006 PBE work measurement survey for Sierra Leone showed that an average of 70% of the year was spent on regular programme and technical support activities while 30% was spent on administration. The programme development and liaison activities focused mainly on budget holder responsibilities, liaison work through the UNCT and its thematic groups, and, coordination and information exchange. It was noted that an average of approximately 3% of the time was spent particularly on project/programme identification. The evaluation considers that this effort is inadequate to grow the programme beyond its current level in the existing country environment but that this is not addressed by the revised staffing profile. Given the workload already in the programme unit and the increased demands for FAO's services described above, we conclude that the FAOR is not adequately resourced to ensure it can properly fulfil the new mandate.

Succession Planning for new FAO Representatives

72. The evaluation found that succession planning has been inadequate. Over the review period, there have been two significant gaps due to excessive delays in filling the FAO Representative's post. In 2001/2002, there was a 10 months gap during which the WHO Representative acted as FAOR a.i. after the sudden and unexpected death of the incumbent. Again in 2006/07, there was a gap⁷ during which the UNDP RR acted as FAOR a.i. In this case, the FAOR's impending retirement in August 2006 was well known to OCD/ODG. To further complicate matters, the UNDP RR/FAOR a.i. is also

⁶ DGB 2007/04 also states that Representatives are expected to contribute 30% of their time as members of the multidisciplinary team of the Sub-Regional Offices, which seems entirely unrealistic in view of in-country requirements and the staffing situation in the Representation.

⁷ It was learned subsequent to the evaluation that a candidate has been identified and accepted as the new FAOR. He is expected to take up the post in mid-May 2007, meaning that there will have been an 8 ½ months gap.

due to retire in March 2007 which means that the FAOR a.i. arrangements will be passed to yet another busy Head of Agency until the new FAOR is fielded.

73. Using other UN Agency Heads to act as FAORs a.i., while appropriate for short periods of say one to two weeks, has a negative impact if used over extended periods. The evaluation found that the long gap between Representatives has: weakened control of the office; resulted in overloading of the Assistant FAOR (Programme); weakened FAO's presence in multi-stakeholder discussions (e.g. UNDAF, DACO); negatively impacted on resource mobilisation initiatives; and, created delays in addressing pressing project implementation issues. For example, there was urgent need to follow-up with Government on payments due to project GCP/SIL/024/GER for seeds procured during the 2006 planting season. However, follow-up with the MAFS and Ministry of Finance was only expedited during the recent visit of the previous FAOR as resource person for this evaluation. Programme development was also moribund during the hiatus, at a time when several projects were ending. This is unsatisfactory and damaging. Ideally, there should be a period of overlap between incumbents, or at minimum a substantive briefing from the previous incumbent, before a new FAOR takes up his post. In the case of new FAORs coming from outside the Organisation, the inability to benefit from previous FAORs (especially active and knowledgeable ones like the former FAOR in Sierra Leone) results in a much steeper learning curve, with all the attendant inefficiencies.

Recruitment of the Assistant FAOR (Administration)

74. The local selection process for the Assistant FAOR (Admin) was completed and the submission made to OCD in April 2005, to which the FAOR did not receive a response. At OCD's request, the post was re-advertised in early 2006 and the submission made to OCD in July 2006, again without response. This is of concern as: a) this elaborate exercise was undertaken twice without any recruitment action; b) it is unlikely that the preferred candidate, who had previous UN experience, would still be available eight months later; c) the international Administrative Officer, who had been extended in post until June 2007 specifically to train the new Assistant FAOR(Admin), may not be available after this period; d) If both FAOR and Assistant FAOR (Admin) are new to the Organisation, then the efficiency of the Representation will be impaired until they gain the necessary experience. This situation contributes to reducing the efficiency of the administration which is responsible for supporting the Representation's operations and should be speedily addressed.

Programme Development

75. Government requests received generally drove the planning process. These were reportedly based on needs assessments, the recommendations of the June 2002 report by the then-Director of TCO that launched several planning activities (see Chapter 4.3) and Government priorities evolving from MDGs 1 & 7 and the various strategic plans and sector development strategies developed, e.g. PRSP Pillar II and the Government's medium term agricultural strategic plan 2003-2007. However, the FAOR/SIL does not have in place a plan to help prioritize or guide the selection process to ensure adequate synergies are created internally between FAO's activities,

and, externally with those of other actors. The evaluation considers this to be essential in a situation where there are many competing needs, scarce resources and donor reluctance to invest in certain areas such as capacity building of the Ministries.

76. The evaluation has noted the planning processes being developed in other countries on a pilot basis for creating a national priority framework. Such an approach should be used in Sierra Leone to develop a rolling framework, covering perhaps four years. Resource requirements could also be indicated. The priority framework should be reviewed periodically - every 1-2 years. It should specify intended outcomes, but not be tied down in the form of projects or programmes for implementation. This would ensure that FAO continues to play an active role in promoting food security and poverty reduction.

Advocacy

77. One of the main tasks of an FAO Representation is advocacy, aimed at promoting issues felt to be particularly important. The objective has been to raise the profile of these issues and to create support for addressing them, in partnership with Government and other actors (donors, NGOs) in the country.
78. The FAO Representative during the evaluation period was very active with advocacy. He attended many events (meetings, workshops, seminars, etc.) and was said by his in-country colleagues in other agencies to have been an active and effective spokesperson for FAO and for addressing the issues in FAO's mandate.
79. One of the main advocacy areas was the inclusion of food security as a major theme in the PRSP and the UNDAF, building on the President's food security pledge of 2002. This was achieved through direct advocacy by the FAOR as well as provision of backstopping to line Ministries that were involved in development planning processes, including the Right-to-Food Secretariat, which was particularly active with respect to the PRSP. The anniversary of the President's pledge (19 May) is now commemorated and the FAO advocacy has played a role in this recognition. FAO has strongly advocated Government ownership and leadership of food security initiatives, although some donors have preferred in recent years to channel assistance through NGOs.
80. FAO has attended most of the meetings to review Pillar-II, organized by DACO. This was normally done by the Assistant FAOR (Programme) and this was an appropriate level of representation.
81. More recently, subsequent to an outbreak in Nigeria, the FAOR was instrumental in advocating the adoption of a plan for the prevention and control of avian influenza. This was the first activity of its type in Sierra Leone, and resulted in the formation of a National Avian Flu secretariat, including a technical and inter-ministerial committee.
82. Much of the successful advocacy work was connected to partnership efforts. Some of these are cited elsewhere in this evaluation, e.g. work with UNDP, CORAD and WFP on OFTN; crop survey and vulnerability assessment and school gardens with school

feeding (with WFP) and publicity of FAO activities on radio with the UN Communications Group. The FAOR has helped the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security to dialogue with partners, such as the National Association of Farmers of Sierra Leone (NAFSL). It also assisted in negotiations with IFAD, that led to a revival of the suspended North Central Development Project and formulation of new projects.

83. FAOR advocacy was particularly active within the UN Country Team and with the Government. Rather less was achieved with bilateral donors in the country, but there were factors that contributed to this. A major one was an absence of interlocutors that deal with agriculture. The largest bilateral donor in Sierra Leone, DFID, does not have an agricultural portfolio. USAID channels all its support through NGOs, but here the work on FFS did have considerable coordination with the CORAD group that is supported by USAID. The EU is another major donor, but the post of Rural Development Adviser was vacant for two years. Other donors present in Freetown have very small programmes.

3.2. Technical Backstopping and Support from FAO Headquarters and Regional/Sub-regional Office

84. FAO provides technical expertise through a variety of sources including FAO staff in Headquarters and the Regional Offices, consultants (national and international) as well as through the many regional and sub-regional technical committees and working groups of which Sierra Leone is a member.
85. During the period 2002-2006, the Representation hosted roughly 15 missions per annum. Approximately 40% of these were review and formulation missions, involving RAF and Headquarters technical divisions, and, policy assistance provided through RAF. Project backstopping, training, and evaluation/assessment missions accounted for 55% provided through international consultants, Headquarters technical divisions, and RAF⁸. Of these only three missions in 2003 and four missions in 2006 were neither project related, requested by Government nor by the FAOR. They were concerned primarily with evaluations and sectoral studies e.g. the Fish Survey in the waters off the Liberian coast.
86. During 2006, FAO provided 1,700 person/days of technical expertise to the Government of Sierra Leone. Approximately 90% was delivered through project related activities, with national consultants accounting for 70%, international consultants for 23% and Headquarters missions for 7%. One long-term international consultant recruited in 2005 and five national professional project staff made up the bulk of the person/days worked. RAF did not undertake any missions to Sierra Leone during 2006.
87. The Representative has been very active in soliciting support from RAF and Headquarters Technical Divisions. His success, which was most evident in the period

⁸ The remaining 5% were visiting missions from other Agencies seeking information on sector issues

following the Presidential pledge, may be attributable to several favourable conditions that include the transitional status of the country, the FAO commitment to the food security agenda, the involvement of FAO technical and managerial expertise at high level in the sector review activities, and the FAOR's collegial style of working. However, delays were noted in responses to requests. RAF support was constrained by the lack of human and financial resources. For example, in developing the SPFS/OFTN programme, the FAOR required RAF to assist in elaborating the document, either through staff time or providing a consultant, but this was not possible due to lack of funds. As a result, FAO's inputs to the exercise were delayed.

88. The reform process is intended to bring FAO's expertise closer to country level, but adequate financial resources to facilitate implementation must also be provided. Budgets of financial resources for the Regional offices set high income targets. Priority therefore is on those missions where income can be earned, typically project related technical backstopping. This reduces the possibility of FAO addressing problems or requests from FAORs in areas where there is no project against which the mission can be charged, and non-staff Regular Programme resources are very scarce in any case.
89. The evaluation has noted that FAO had virtually no non-project related activities in Sierra Leone (see section 5.1). An additional constraint is the lack of motivation in the concerned Ministries to provide data or information requested from Headquarters in support of these non-project activities, e.g. statistical surveys. The Assistant FAOR (Programme) therefore has to make a personal, special effort to obtain the required information.
90. Sierra Leone is part of the tri-nation Mano River Union, along with Liberia and Guinea. The UNCT regards close collaboration between the UN Agencies in the three countries as an essential tool to ensure mutually beneficial development, peace and stability between the three countries. Periodic meetings are held and although FAO has participated in the past, this has been despite great difficulty in obtaining timely approvals from Headquarters even where there is no cost implication for FAO. Furthermore, within the context of DGB2007/04, it is expected that the FAORs in the sub-region would have the opportunity to meet periodically with sub-regional technical officers, to share experiences and technical expertise. The evaluation believes that FAOR participation in these meetings is important for developing greater internal synergy. FAOR participation in these fora should therefore be actively supported by the Organization through providing timely travel clearances and resources to facilitate participation of the concerned FAORs.

3.3. Cost-Effectiveness of Operations

91. The evaluation examined the processes associated with procurement, recruitment, project operations, budget control and financial management of resources. The Representative had established procedures for project implementation and divided related tasks between the programme and administrative units. In general, the

arrangements were practical and supported project operations. However, there is need to ensure back-up support is provided in case of staff absences.

92. Unlike other countries, there were few complaints of delayed implementation due to existing rules and constraining delegated authorities from responsible staff. This was due in part to greater dependence on TCE to recruit and initiate procurement actions during the emergency period when the Representation was busiest. Subsequently, the relatively lower level of project activities as well as the measure of non-compliance with organisational rules were also contributory factors. The major issues noted are discussed below.

Procurement and Delivery

93. During the entire evaluation period, approximately US\$1.5 million was spent on procurement of project inputs⁹ locally while US\$1.9 million was procured through Headquarters. Total procurement averaged \$570,000 per year, which is quite small compared to other countries that have been through complex emergencies, e.g. Somalia and southern Sudan.
94. In 2004, a local procurement committee was established to review all purchases greater than \$1,000. The evaluation found evidence of splitting of tenders to remain within the existing delegated authority of \$25,000. Through DGB2006/19, FAORs were given the option of revising this ceiling upwards by applying to AFSP, through OCD. The past Representative did not request the increased delegation. His rationale was that at the time the offer came, there were no procurement actions that would have exceeded the ceiling. Furthermore, a new ceiling of \$50,000 should have been made automatic for all Representatives and only those requiring levels above \$50,000 should have been asked to make the request. The evaluation strongly supports this view.

Recruitment

95. The Representation recruited national consultants as project staff and also as temporary staff of the Representation. An average of 65 contracts were issued annually during the period 2004-2006 of which PSAs were about 48% and temporary or casual labour contracts the remainder. Multiple PSA and temporary contracts were given to national consultants and drivers. In a number of cases, issuance of PSA contracts not only exceeded the delegated authority, but were inappropriate for the nature of the work. FAORs have delegated authority for issuing PSA contracts for up to 11 months within a 12 month period. Subsequent appointments should be handled through the Management Support Unit in the Regional Office (RAFX). In addition subscribers are expected to be in the professional category and to work independently. In the instances noted, professional project staff were issued with contracts exceeding 11 months without going through RAFX, and several PSAs were given to support staff, e.g drivers. These contracts generated additional work in the Administrative Unit, as up to 10

⁹ This does not include fuel, vehicle spares or stationery

contracts per individual were prepared for the year. All of the ten¹⁰ professional project staff (NPP) employed during 2004-2006 were given multiple contracts. Three of them worked continuously on short PSA contracts for 32.5 months, without the mandatory breaks.

96. MS375, re-issued in 2006, makes provision for recruiting national project personnel for a maximum of 12 months at a stretch for the duration of the project. However, the administrative unit was still issuing PSAs and temporary contracts to project staff in 2007. A constraint was that access to the FAO Intranet, where the up-dated manual sections are available, was not always possible and the international administrative officer was not up-to-date on these changes.
97. Posts or vacancies were not generally advertised, except for Representation RP staff where recruitment was finalized by OCD. The same individuals were recruited repeatedly, especially project coordinators and consultants, but there was no evidence that this was through a competitive process nor were there any performance reviews done. There was no guarantee therefore that the most qualified staff were recruited, or that the Representation had received services giving good value-for-money. This was reportedly due to FAO's rates of compensation being non-competitive and therefore a major constraint to recruiting the best consultants. Furthermore, given the scarcity of jobs locally, it was not cost-effective to advertise vacancies in view of the likely large numbers of applications and the review time that would be required and which the Representation could not afford. Consultants who had worked for FAO before were therefore the preferred candidates and were transferred from project to project.

Operational Procedures / Project Implementation Tools

98. Project monitoring was constrained by inadequate human and financial resources in the FAOR RP budget to cover travel to project sites. The Representation therefore depended on the coordinators' reports to obtain information on project status. This weakened the monitoring function, which may be the root cause of deficiencies noted in the procurement process and the poor success rate of the Telefood projects discussed further in this report.
99. LOAs/MOUs were not used extensively as an implementation tool. Instead, the Representation purchased inputs through local tenders for either direct distribution or distribution through cooperating partners, e.g. MAFS. In view of the small amounts involved, this appears to be a practical solution. However, the new Representative should review the procedures as the level of activity increases to ensure efficiency, cost-effectiveness and transparency.
100. Delays in project start-up and closures were noted and these appear linked to inadequate access to FPMIS, as well as inadequate application of operations procedures by the programme and administrative units. Start-up procedures i.e. initial

¹⁰ This information is based on recruitment records reviewed in the Representation since these NPPs were all recruited locally.

task force meetings, are not followed systematically neither are requests for financial closures timely. There is need to re-train staff of these units in project operations procedures and ensure reliable access to FPMIS.

Budget Control and Financial management

101. Access to the corporate systems has helped the Representation better track expenditures on projects and the Regular Programme. Systematic monitoring is, however, constrained by the limitations of the FAS budget module and the limited capacity of the administrative unit to perform this task regularly.
102. Headquarters does not enter the budgets in Oracle on a timely basis - therefore the information available in FAS usually is not current. The Administrative Officer is the only staff member familiar enough with FAS and DWH to prepare financial statements. He uses the information from the DWH as well as the FAS expenditures to prepare financial statements in spreadsheets, whenever needed for budget revisions. Monitoring of resource availability through generating regular financial statements for management review was therefore not undertaken. This aspect of the Representation's budget control needs to be strengthened to support the decision making process.
103. The FAOR regular programme budget over the evaluation period has averaged approximately \$530,000 per year of which the non-staff budget constitutes 30%. FAORs are not normally involved in the budgeting exercise as this is a purely OCD/HQ led exercise. The Representation had not received its 2007 allotment at the time of the evaluation mission, but a realistic budget for non-staff costs for 2007 is \$176,000. This includes security charges, UN common services, and general operations of the Representation based on past expenditure. However, assuming the same funding level as in 2006 is allocated, there will be a shortfall of close to \$40,000. AOS resources are included in the overall OCD budget estimates for general operating expenses and are therefore not available to support the programme unit, for example through hiring temporary assistance. The evaluation believes that FAORs should participate in the budgeting process and that resources earned through AOS should be allocated to support programme growth as much as is possible.
104. Table 1 below shows the FAOR budget compared to funds distributed through the office, by year during the evaluation period.

Table 1: FAO Representation Budget (US\$)

Item / Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Total FAOR Budget	311,150 ¹¹	522,104	595,844	665,770	598,611	501,332 ¹²
Of which Non-staff component	169,883	172,901	154,381	187,373	139,662	137,753
Of which AOS component	-	-	-	-	24,000	82,000

Total annual FAS Disbursements	766,372	1,198,107	1,894,771	2,411,075	1,869,581	2,250,608
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Information Technology

105. The Representation accesses COIN, FPMIS and DWH through the Internet as access to the Intranet is intermittent due to poor connectivity. The disadvantage is that they cannot access the manual sections on-line and so are not up-to-date with administrative changes.
106. In addition, with the departure of the FAOR, in August 2006, the password used to access 'My FPMIS' expired. Therefore, while the office can 'see' information in the system they cannot input information directly which makes programme monitoring more tedious as they then need to send the information to RAF for inputting. The evaluation believes that the Representation should request Headquarters to issue a new password.

3.4. Overall Conclusions

107. There is an overall positive judgement of the performance of the Representation. FAO enjoys a good reputation in the country, particularly among the Government and the rest of the UN system. Relations with bilateral donors and IFIs are also good. However, the office is very thinly staffed on the Programme side, and the long vacancy in the FAOR position has been a major weakness, as programme development in the country has largely ground to a halt. The evaluation has also noted issues to be addressed to improve administrative performance.
108. After the initial flurry of activity subsequent to the Presidential food security pledge, FAO did not have an agreed framework to guide its cooperation with Sierra Leone. Thus, the interventions were largely opportunistic and depended on requests received or the FAOR's own initiatives. This does not provide a good basis for mobilizing resources, neither the scarce ones available within FAO nor from donors.

¹¹ and ¹² Actual expenditure used as budgeted amount not available from DWH

109. While the FAOR was an effective advocate, he was not, nor could he be expected, to have a command of all technical areas. For reasons outlined above, there were numerous times when the FAOR requested support from other parts of the Organization, including notably the Regional Office, but these requests were not answered. Resource constraints have continued to plague the operation of the office in Sierra Leone, and these would have been even worse had there not been the German-funded projects during the evaluation period, which have now ended or will end soon. The evaluation feels that the resource situation deserves the urgent attention of FAO management.

4. Summary of Activities and Results in Major Areas Supported by FAO in Sierra Leone

110. The following chapter includes a summary of the activities carried out by FAO in Sierra Leone during the evaluation period. From an initial emphasis on emergencies, and subsequent to the President's food security pledge, FAO assistance moved into development of agricultural policies and strategies. After the policy guidelines were put in place, FAO assisted in its implementation, largely through three German-funded projects (on Operation Feed The Nation, rehabilitation of the seeds sector, and establishment of a Right-to-Food secretariat) and also with support from TCP. The chapter looks at these various intervention areas and some cross-cutting issues addressed by FAO during the evaluation period.

4.1. The FAO Portfolio in Sierra Leone

111. During the evaluation period, the FAO portfolio in Sierra Leone has changed considerably. The level in terms of funding has decreased, along with the number of donors, as immediate rehabilitation activities no longer feature in the portfolio. At present, the only donor funding projects through FAO in Sierra Leone is the Federal Republic of Germany. In 2006, Germany was funding three national projects in Sierra Leone, plus a regional project on fair trade and organic product certification in which Sierra Leone was actively participating. During the evaluation period, only one other non-emergency project was funded by a bilateral donor (Ireland).
112. The evaluation covered a total of 30 projects, of which 20 were classified as emergency rehabilitation activities and 10 were development. Among the emergency projects, thirteen were primarily for seeds and tools distribution and seven were others, largely aimed at rural rehabilitation. Eight of the projects were funded by TCP. The complete list of projects included in the evaluation is included in Annex 7.
113. The table below shows expenditure on national projects by type and source of funding for the years 2001-2006.

Table 2: Project expenditure by type and source of funding¹³

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total
Emergency rehabilitation projects							
Primarily Seeds & Tools	553,963	1,898,211	937,942	503,920	40,598	2,265	3,936,898
Others	0	373,105	416,695	1,159,914	127,194	8,660	2,085,568
Total	553,963	2,271,316	1,354,637	1,663,834	167,792	10,925	6,022,466
of which:							
TCP	44,703	534,476	236,932	200,778	1,819	0	1,018,708
Other donors	509,259	1,736,840	1,117,705	1,463,056	165,973	10,925	5,003,758
Development projects							
TCP	0	8,162	341,392	347,342	178,543	58,410	933,848
Other donors	0	0	0	152,238	1,746,557	1,612,564	3,511,359
Total	0	8,162	341,392	499,580	1,925,100	1,670,974	4,445,207
Total (emergency + development)	553,963	2,279,478	1,696,028	2,163,413	2,092,892	1,681,899	10,467,673

114. The Table shows clearly the evolution of FAO-cooperation over the review period. Emergency rehabilitation projects were 100% of the total FAO project-based cooperation in 2001 and 99.6% in 2002, but fell as a percentage of expenditure in subsequent years, to 8% in 2005 and less than 1% in 2006, as the country situation returned to normal. Even within the emergency rehabilitation projects, seeds and tools distribution predominated until 2003 but there was an ever-increasing amount of expenditure on projects dealing with other forms of livelihood rehabilitation starting from 2002 and reaching a peak in 2004.
115. Expenditure on donor-funded projects in Sierra Leone has ranged from US\$1.1 million - US\$1.9 million since 2002, with the major shift from focus on emergency rehabilitation to development coming between the years 2004 and 2005. However, it is projected that there will be a dramatic decline in delivery in 2007 as the number of operational donor-funded projects declines.

4.2. Emergency Rehabilitation Interventions

¹³ Telefood and Regional projects excluded

116. FAO enjoys considerable credit for its constant involvement in emergency rehabilitation throughout most of the civil war period. FAO began operating emergency rehabilitation projects in the country as early as 1995, while the war was going on. The assistance programme grew after the signing of the Lomé Agreement in July 1999, permitting the return of international personnel to the country. An FAO Emergency Coordinator was already fielded by August 1999 and an Emergency Coordination Unit (ECU) was established.
117. The emergency rehabilitation assistance programme increased further with the return of more peaceful conditions in 2001, which is the start of the period covered by this evaluation. Emergency rehabilitation assistance through FAO can be characterised as falling into two types, with some overlapping:
- supply of agricultural inputs (mostly seeds and tools) and coordination of input supplies;
 - rehabilitation and training for most affected populations.
118. During the evaluation period, some 18 emergency rehabilitation projects were implemented in Sierra Leone. Sources of funding were bilateral donors (Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, USA), the EC, UNHCR and FAO TCP.
119. Projects for distribution of agricultural inputs targeted returning refugees, displaced persons and ex-combatants. Liberian refugees and their host families were targeted particularly in two interventions. Rice and groundnuts seeds were generally provided and vegetable seeds were included in some projects, to target women in particular. However, vegetable seeds were usually not accompanied by fertiliser and agro-chemicals, without which yields could not reach their potential. Seeds were generally procured on the local market, and one TCP project was specifically geared towards increasing the availability of certified seeds for distribution to needy farmers. Hand tools were procured from local blacksmiths when possible, including those trained under FAO projects. However, the volume required was such that imported tools also had to be purchased.
120. Aside from the provision of rehabilitation supplies, FAO played a vital role in coordination of the large volume of emergency assistance to Sierra Leone. This assistance was widely acknowledged to have resulted in better targeting of beneficiaries and reducing duplication of effort. It also permitted FAO TCP assistance, a more flexible source of funding, to fill gaps more effectively. Activities included chiefdom-level vulnerability assessments, crop surveys and mapping of vulnerability using the Dynamic Atlas, which enabled production of the Sierra Leone Food Security Atlas. With UNICEF and the Ministry of Health, the EU undertook a pilot Food Security and Nutrition Surveillance exercise, to identify early warning signs of seasonal food insecurity and acute malnutrition and to identify factors contributing to chronic food insecurity and malnutrition.
121. NGOs were effectively brought into the coordination process, thus reducing duplication in the provision of assistance. Food aid was integrated with seed supply, to ensure that

- seed was used as intended and not consumed during annual hungry periods. Despite relatively low funding levels, it was estimated that in the last major year of funding agricultural relief (2003), some 60% of needy families received assistance. Reports indicated that 90% of the inputs were appropriately used.
122. In 2002, FAO carried out an evaluation of its overall emergency activities at corporate level¹⁴. A mission to Sierra Leone in connection with that evaluation found that there were considerable delays in acquiring inputs, which meant that requirements of the agricultural calendar were too often not respected. Quality of local rice seed distributed was determined to be poor, due to the local gene pool having been depleted over the years and the absence of functioning institutions to look after the maintenance and multiplication of quality seeds, including foundation and certified seeds. Albeit on a small scale, this problem was directly addressed by one of the TCP projects implemented during the emergency rehabilitation period, TCP/SIL/0167 (see Annex 5). This was the only intervention aimed directly at improving seed quality. These problems were confirmed by the impact assessment study undertaken for this evaluation, where 46% of respondents mentioned quality problems with seeds received in emergency programmes. Thirty-one percent mentioned poor germination and 23% said that seeds were received too late for the season for which they were intended.
123. Efforts were made to monitor beneficiaries after the input distribution, but this was never done systematically. The impact study undertaken for this evaluation, carried out three years after FAO-provided assistance ended, found that 82% of the respondents felt that the emergency rehabilitation assistance they received was beneficial. While no benchmarks exist for whether this is a satisfactory result, the evaluation considers it to be minimally acceptable. A key problem was obviously that the packages provided were too small to provide inputs sufficient to feed a family through to the next season. The impact assessment survey noted, for example, that only 48% of the emergency assistance recipients retained seed for use in the next year. The size of the packages was constrained by funding and the quality of the materials provided has been noted above.
124. Some projects did not distribute seeds and tools, but rather focused on livelihood rehabilitation and skills development. Such projects started in early 2002, with the Netherlands-funded blacksmith project (OSRO/SIL/105/NET), followed in 2003 with a TCP for training of disabled people in blacksmithery and food processing (TCP/SIL/2903) and in 2004 by Irish-funded projects for processing facilities (particularly aimed at women beneficiaries) and village-level livestock rehabilitation (OSRO/SIL/303/IRE and OSRO/SIL/304/IRE) and a Swedish-funded project for addressing rural youth through cooperative fishing and crop production (OSRO/SIL/401/SWE).

¹⁴ Evaluation of Strategic Objective A3 - "Preparedness for an Effective and Sustainable Response to Food and Agricultural Emergencies"

125. The evaluation viewed a sample of these activities, including two blacksmith workshops of the Netherlands project, a workshop and processing units provided under the TCP (see separate report on TCP/SIL/2903 in Annex 5) and a youth fishing group from the Swedish project. All the activities were continuing, although the blacksmiths and food processing activities were operating well below capacity. However, equipment provided was still functioning. While no examples of village livestock rehabilitation were seen, the evaluation notes on the positive side that this project wisely provided vaccine, which is not normally available in Sierra Leone rural areas and is important to the success of livestock rehabilitation¹⁵. Poultry rehabilitation was affected negatively by the precautionary moves taken by Sierra Leone subsequent to the outbreak of avian flu in early 2006 in Nigeria.
126. The FAO interventions towards rehabilitation were small pilot initiatives that highlighted the need to address particular vulnerable groups. For example, youth unemployment is stressed as an issue of concern in all analyses of Sierra Leone's post-war development. One emergency project specially addressed this target group, but it did not inspire large-scale follow-up from donors¹⁶. FAO has followed up on some of these projects through its involvement in Operation Feed the Nation. Some FFS are engaged in animal production (usually poultry and small ruminants) and processing machines have started to be made available to established FFS through loans channelled through FFS District Networks.

4.3. Development of Agricultural Policy and Agricultural Development Strategy (including Right to Food)

127. The Presidential pledge on food security of May 2002 marked the beginning of a new orientation to FAO activities in Sierra Leone. The pledge came at the same time as changes were being made in the orientation of the FAO Special Programme on Food Security (SPFS), subsequent to an evaluation of that Programme. These changes were intended to broaden the scope of the SPFS and include wider dimensions of food security. The first step in Sierra Leone was a mission, headed by the then-Director of the Field Operations Division, to determine how FAO could best assist Sierra Leone in implementing the pledge. That mission assisted in the preparation of an Interim Statement of Policy Intent for the Agriculture Sector in Sierra Leone (October 2002). The Statement included that MAFS intended to formulate and implement policies and programmes for the development of the agricultural sector with the following objectives:
- Increase diversified domestic production of food, with a view to achieving food security in the medium to long term;
 - Increase agricultural productivity, output, rural incomes and employment, while ensuring adequate protection of the environment;

¹⁵ The impact studies undertaken for the evaluation revealed that only 1% of the farmers interviewed vaccinate regularly.

¹⁶ However, UNDP has a Youth Engagement and Job Creation Programme that works with MAFS.

- Ensure balanced regional agricultural growth and equitable distribution of income; and
 - Maximise foreign exchange earnings from the agricultural sector.
128. The Interim Statement of Policy Intent also defined the role envisaged for the state. The Statement was never formally adopted but served as a general guide for the MAFS at central level in its subsequent actions.
129. Mobilising more than 20 short-term consultants, all paired with local experts, FAO then initiated a major planning exercise, with financial support from the World Bank, IFAD and UNDP, to draft an Agricultural Sector Review and Agricultural Development Strategy (ASR). FAO support was funded largely through an TCP project (TCP/SIL/2904). While the main work was done in 2003, the Government officially adopted the review in June 2004. The main objective was to develop the substantial potential for agricultural sector growth by:
- Implementing a Right to Food and Food Safety Net Programme;
 - Improving rural/village infrastructure;
 - Commercialisation of agriculture and export promotion;
 - Efficient provision of agricultural services;
 - Human resource development – empowering the people;
 - Expansion and diversification of crop and livestock production to ensure food security;
 - Sustainable natural resource management (Land, Forestry and Fisheries).
130. FAO was the lead agency for the elaboration of the ASR. Taking stock of the post-conflict situation in the country, the comprehensive document (main report plus 18 sector reports) provided the best data base for the agricultural sector at that point in time. A key problem to be addressed was seasonal food insecurity at the start of the rainy season (July-August) when labour and energy requirements were at their highest and food from the previous year had been depleted. The recommendations of the ASR advocated an orientation towards the private sector with the implication that agriculture had to be an economically viable business, along with human rights-based approaches to food security and development. In a period of conceptual uncertainty, FAO assisted MAFS (and MFMR) via the ASR in an optimal way – leaving it to the ministries mentioned to take over ownership and responsibility for the realisation of proposals to the sector's development. The ASR was universally praised by interlocutors in Sierra Leone for its quality and timeliness.
131. However, it was felt that in some respects, the ASR was too technical in its approach and a wider food security strategy was needed. FAO subsequently participated in the preparation of a National Food Security Strategy with WFP and CORAD. The strategy included an assessment of food security in the country, a strategy and policies needed to address food security, an institutional framework for doing this and a monitoring and evaluation framework. The document was compiled with inputs from NGOs and civil society. It was finalised and adopted by the Government in September 2004. The

- document is very ambitious and includes significant expectations from the Right-to-Food Secretariat (see below). As part of other policy initiatives, FAO also worked with WFP on Vulnerability Assessment & Mapping (VAM-Report) and commented on the 2005 Food Aid Strategy, which was prepared largely by WFP.
132. In commemoration of the first anniversary of the President's pledge (May 2003), a Right-to-Food seminar was held in Freetown. Because of the interest shown in the topic, the German Government agreed to finance a project (GCP/SIL/022/GER) to assist with the establishment of a Right-to-Food Secretariat. A full evaluation of the project is in Annex 3. A Right-to-Food Secretariat was established under the Vice-President at the national level. While the Secretariat could claim success for the inclusion of food security in the PRSP (see below), it did not play an effective inter-ministerial coordination role, nor did it develop the desired degree of cooperation with NGOs and outreach to the grassroots level. The project was too ambitious in scope to be implemented within the given two-year time frame. Whether the establishment of the Secretariat will lead to sustainable results depends on the interest and resources on the part of the Government to maintain the institutional and political structures that have been established. The continued vacancy of the Executive Secretary position and the absence of funding, now that the project is over, means that the Secretariat will be unable to address the shortcomings identified.
 133. However, one of the clear successes of this project, due largely to the efforts of the then-Executive Secretary, was that food security found entrance into the first PRSP for the period 2005 -07 (Pillar II: promoting pro-poor growth for food security and job creation in a healthy macro-economic environment). This objective fully corresponds to MDG 1, *eradicating poverty and hunger*. The Executive Secretary was assisted in this by the FAOR, who participated regularly in the PRSP working groups. At the same time, the FAOR promoted agricultural/rural development and food security strategies at the conceptual discussions within the UNCT, when elaborating the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) (see Advocacy Campaigns under 3.1 above).
 134. Once the policy and strategic planning task was largely accomplished, efforts turned towards implementation of the plans. The PRSP was used by the Government as a framework for seeking development assistance for food security initiatives. The FAOR played a role, and was effectively supported by technical units HQ and RAF, including missions fielded by the FAO Investment Centre (TCI). A key role in the monitoring of the PRSP should be played by the MAFS Project Monitoring, Evaluation and Statistics Division (PEMSD). A request for FAO TCP assistance to PEMS D has been pending for some time. However, longer term support may be more appropriate for the Division's needs than can be offered from TCP.
 135. The Investment Centre has been involved in the preparation of two projects each for the African Development Bank (ADB) also prepared the national medium-term investment programme and bankable projects under TCP/SIL/2905.

136. The ADB projects are the Artisanal Fisheries Development (US\$12.9 million) signed in January 2002 and the Agricultural Sector Rehabilitation Project and Grant (ASREP) signed in April 2006 (US\$17.76 million). The IFAD project already signed is the Rehabilitation and Community-Based Poverty Reduction Project (RCPRP) (US\$8.51 million). The Rural Finance and Community Improvement Project (RFCIP) (US\$13.9 million) identification was carried out by TCI; it was to be submitted for approval to the IFAD Board in April 2007.
137. The ASREP and RCPRP projects are complementary and aimed at increasing the quantity and quality of agricultural production, thus increasing food availability at household level and for sale. The ASREP project works in Kenema, Pujehun, Moyamba, Port Loko and Kambia Districts, while RCPRP is present in Kono and Kailahun. The projects have a common coordination unit in Freetown, autonomous from MAFS and when the RFCIP comes on line, it will also be handled by the same unit. The projects will make use of FFS for service delivery, with a target of reaching 21,000 beneficiaries. Besides agricultural production, the project will deal with storage and marketing and other issues such as group organisation, gender, HIV/AIDS, health and nutrition, literacy, community planning and conflict resolution.
138. The projects had a long gestation period, having been formulated in 2002 and appraised in 2004. The project started in July 2006 and the first ADB disbursement was in November 2006; by the time of the evaluation the first IFAD disbursement had not been made.
139. The project forms a key part of the scaling-up strategy for FFS in Sierra Leone and is thus an important effect of the work started by FAO in the immediate post-emergency period.
140. While there have been some successes, including those mentioned above, much of what was planned in Pillar II of the PRSP remains unimplemented and uncertain. There are several reasons for this:
 - Major donors, in particular DFID and World Bank, through general budget support assistance, gave priority to social sectors (education, health) and infrastructure. Despite the Maputo Declaration recommendation, the Government only managed to lift agricultural sector's budget share to some 4.5% in 2006 (the Maputo Declaration target is 10%). While some major agricultural support initiatives are being started, there is no sector-wide, programme-based approach.
 - Long delays in starting up investment projects. The ADB and IFAD agricultural development are cases in point. Funding for major scaling up of OFTN is still being sought.
 - The decentralisation process has not yet channeled much support to agriculture. After being absent for some 30 years, District Councils were reinstated from January 2005. Thus far, they have concentrated on the establishment of structures and new procedures.

- Commercial agriculture hardly exists. There are very few large-scale farmers. Even large farmers tend to seek project or Government support for their endeavours. The private sector in agriculture is thus very weak, despite efforts being made now to promote it (e.g. by the World Bank).
 - Agricultural banks are not found in rural areas; hardly any credit programme is available to farmers and informal money lenders apply highly unfavourable terms.
 - Government institutional capacity is weak, salaries are very low, no qualification and incentive systems are in place and there is a lack of equipment, communication facilities, transport, etc.
 - Construction of rural roads continues to be inadequate for the development of agriculture.
141. All of the above have contributed to slower investment in agriculture than could have been expected at the time that the Agricultural Development Strategy was being prepared.

4.4. Operation Feed The Nation (OFTN) – Farmers’ Field Schools (FFS)

142. *Operation Feed The Nation* (OFTN) is the cornerstone of the Sierra Leone Government’s strategy for Pillar II on food security in the PRSP. Designed in cooperation with the FAO Special Programme on Food Security (SPFS), OFTN was conceived as developing in three stages:
143. **Stage 1 – Preparatory Phase:** This phase began with a study tour of existing FFS programmes in Uganda and Ghana by six Sierra Leoneans, including the Deputy Minister for Agriculture, a Paramount Chief, a female farmer and government representatives. A concept note for the Sierra Leone FFS Programme was drafted, followed by preparation of a curriculum suitable to Sierra Leone. This included group farming on FFS plots, with benefits from the plots accruing to group members. The next activity was a three-month training of trainers (May – August 2003) involving 31 staff (27 from MAFS and 4 from CRS). By December 2003, six FFS had been set up in each district and Western Area, making a total of 78. Training of FFS facilitators continued in 2004, and in March 2004 the ‘Operation Feed the Nation’ Steering Committee had its inaugural meeting. By May 2004, the first Schools had completed their 16-week curricula and participating farmers graduated. The first stage was supported by an allocation from FAO’s Regular Programme (SPFS).
144. **Stage 2 – Consolidation Phase:** The second stage was guided by a project proposal that had been developed by an FAO mission that took place in May 2004. The curricula were revised and fine-tuned over the course of a three-day workshop with District Coordinators and District Directors of Agriculture in July 2004. Training of trainers continued and 41 more FFS were established in each district in 2005. In August 2005, 140 farmer graduates from the FFS Programme were trained as Farmer Facilitators and each one subsequently established three Farmer-Facilitated FFS.

145. District-level Networks of Schools began to be established, linking FFS that registered with the Network. Networks began to establish bank accounts, and some began to distribute processing units supplied by the FFS Programme - including threshers, winnowers and mills for rice; peelers, graters and chipping machines for cassava - and low-cost small irrigation systems. These were supplied on a cost recovery basis to FFS, with the funds for repayments being retained by the District Networks for more equipment purchases for other FFS. In addition, a school garden programme was established for 50 schools in Tonkolili, Kono and Kambia Districts. The school gardens are intended to improve the image of farming and produce vegetables to improve the nutritional value of food provided to the students. During Stage 2, the NGO Consortium for Rehabilitation and Agricultural Development (CORAD), funded by USAID, also began to support FFS, Funding for Stage 2 was provided by FAO TCP (project TCP/SIL/3001), UNDP and the Federal Republic of Germany (project GCP/SIL/024/GER).
146. By the time of the evaluation, it was reported that 1465 FFS had been established in Sierra Leone, of which 981 were through the Government (with TCP, UNDP and German financing) and 484 by NGOs. Assuming an average membership of 25, this would mean over 36,600 farmers have been or are being trained through FFS¹⁷. This is an impressive achievement in a relatively short time. Technical support to the Government programme is supplied by a National Coordinator and national consultants on school gardens, post-harvest and small-scale irrigation. At the time of the evaluation, the national team was awaiting the arrival of four experts and 14 technicians from China, to support the FFS at village-level under an FAO South-South Cooperation agreement. Also, a decision was taken to amalgamate mature Farmers' Field Schools with the Agricultural Business Units, rural organizations for service provision supported by UNDP.
147. The Government is now attempting to arrange financing for **Stage 3 – Rapid Up-scaling Phase**. The goal of this Stage is to reach some 200,000 farmers through FFS. A proposal has been developed and expressions of interest received from the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA) and ADB. At the end of February 2007, a delegation headed by the Minister of Agriculture was expected to go to Khartoum, Tunis and Rome (IFAD) to seek support for the development of a bankable project, estimated at US\$30 million. FFS will be used as the means of service delivery in the recently initiated RCPRP and ASREP projects (see chapter 5.7).
148. A FFS in Sierra Leone generally consists of 25 members. Both men and women can be members. Groups are formed when land is acquired for a group plot. In many countries, the group plot is small and basically used for teaching and demonstration. In Sierra Leone, group plots tend to be large, at least 5-10 acres, with examples of up to 100 acres. The production from these plots is shared (with a certain percentage to the land owner, who is often the FFS Chairman) and group work on the plot may, in some

¹⁷ There are an estimated 500,000 farm families in the country.

- cases, require a considerable proportion of the FFS member's working week. In the case of particularly large FFS plots, local labour is hired to work in the fields. The group plot may thus be of considerable economic significance to the members.
149. The basic requirement to join the FFS is that potential members should have the capacity, time and willingness to participate. By definition, this can lead to exclusion of the most vulnerable, e.g. disabled, elderly, pregnant women, very young. Crops being developed in FFS are generally rice, cassava and vegetables. Some FFS engage in poultry and, in a few cases, other agricultural crops and aquaculture. The idea behind the FFS, in Sierra Leone as elsewhere, is that farmers learn from analysing agronomic situations and working together on a group plot. Their learning is facilitated by a skilled person who has both a sound knowledge base and facilitation ability. In poor developing countries like Sierra Leone, the national extension services can never reach all the farmers needing their services. In FFS, the concept is that eventually farmers themselves will act as facilitators, thus allowing a much greater spread of improved technologies.
 150. The experience of FFS in Sierra Leone was evaluated in early 2006 by the UK Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and Dunstan Spencer and Associates, in a study financed by FAO. It examined some 18 FFS and 18 control villages in three districts. The study, based largely on focus group discussions, concluded that FFS were highly appreciated by members, that there was some positive spin-off effects from the FFS to non-members and that there were higher yields in FFS groups than others.
 151. Because FFS were a major focus of operation for FAO over recent years and recognizing that the ODI study had examined a very small percentage of FFS in the country, it was decided to carry out a larger impact assessment for this evaluation. The impact study covered 1380 individual farmer respondents in six districts (Kambia, Bombali, Bo, Pujehun, Kono, Kailahun). Farmers covered were members of FFS, non-members of FFS in FFS villages, and those in Control Villages without FFS¹⁸. The entire impact study appears as Annex 6 to this report.
 152. The main question for the impact study was whether there was a difference in terms of livelihoods and food security as a result of participation in an FFS, as compared to those who did not participate. Another major question was whether there has been any "spill-over" effect in FFS villages among persons who are not members but who would have been exposed to the results of the FFS, as compared to Control Villages that did not participate at all in the FFS.
 153. On the main question, the survey showed that rice production increased more rapidly since 2004 in FFS villages than in control villages. FFS farmers in the same village started from a higher average production than non-FFS farmers. Average rice production for both groups in FFS villages increased by about the same rate, thus

¹⁸ The impact study also covered emergency assistance distributed through FAO. Control Villages were those that had received emergency input assistance from FAO during the period covered by the evaluation.

- indicating a likely “spill-over” effect from the FFS. This was confirmed in the village-level questionnaire, where FFS villages showed a greater increase in food security over recent years than control villages. However, villagers do not themselves perceive a high degree of food security yet, when this is defined as one main meal per day throughout the year. Only 38% of village leaders in FFS villages stated that more than 75% of its inhabitants had reached that level, and 25% in Control Villages. This is considerably below the often-quoted figure of 65-70% based on the present level of rice self-sufficiency, and may be linked to the strong local preference for rice consumption in determining what constitutes a “main meal”. However, it is a question that deserves further analysis.
154. The impact assessment also found that FFS farmers in the same village started from a higher average production than non-FFS farmers. This is because FFS farmers usually have access to the best land and sometimes are selected especially for this reason.
 155. All respondents cited improved agricultural practices as one the most important benefits of their participation. By comparison, relatively few chose social factors such as better communication skills, enhanced self-reliance, etc.. Among the most successful agricultural practices mentioned were line planting, appropriate spacing, bed preparation, timely planting, composting (manure) and crop protection techniques.
 156. The survey showed farmers believe that increased agricultural production came as a benefit of their participation in the FFS. Some 91% reported that food production had increased on their own farms in the year(s) subsequent to their participation and 87% of these felt that the increase could at least partially be attributed to the FFS.
 157. The survey also assessed whether farmers had actually adopted new farming practices and reasons for non-adoption. Nearly 90% of farmers claimed to have adopted new practices; the type of practice adopted was well distributed among many shown in FFS. FFS members were shown to be more innovative, with 60% of them having adopted new seed varieties within the past two years (compared to 44% of non-members) and 48% planting new crops (40% among non-members). Of the practices that were not adopted, the main one was fertiliser use, followed by row planting. Not surprisingly, the reasons for non-adoption were lack of cash, followed by lack of labour and non-availability of inputs locally.
 158. Gender was found to be an important factor in attendance at FFS, with 9% of women attending less than 50% of the sessions, compared to 3% of men. More women than men also attended between 51-90% of the sessions, while men predominated among those attending over 90% of the meetings. Women were found to be slightly more likely than men to be involved in experiments relating to new varieties or fertiliser use, but participated significantly less in group savings schemes and were less likely to have received loans. Women were more frequent adopters of some agricultural practices such as crop rotations and use of new varieties.

159. Main constraints to production were the same for all groups of farmers. In order, these were harvesting and/or storage; lack of fertiliser; lack of labour. Marketing was a particularly strong constraint for FFS farmers, probably because they market more of their production than do non-FFS farmers. This points to an important area that will have to be addressed by FFS in future.
160. The overall assessment of the FFS is that it is appropriate and promising for use in Sierra Leone. There is a tradition of group work and cooperation that makes the model of the large group plot effective. Farmers are enthusiastic about their participation; their agricultural production appears to be increasing. There is a demand from more farmers to be included, as they perceive the benefits to their neighbours. While the vast majority of subsistence farmers in rural areas live in poverty, there is some evidence that the most disadvantaged are less likely to belong to FFS, because they may be less able to work in the group plots. Inclusion of the poorest and least food-secure thus remains an issue. Also, storage and marketing remain key constraints that FFS have not yet addressed.
161. Because of the success so far, there will undoubtedly be pressures to increase the types of service delivery and numbers of people served through FFS. This would be a normal part of any eventual scaling-up. To be successful, this will have to be done judiciously, taking into account in particular the available human resources for facilitating the tasks being proposed.

4.5. Seeds

162. The largest single intervention in budgetary terms by FAO during the evaluation was project GCP/SIL/023/GER "Development of a Sustainable Seed Programme in Sierra Leone". The three-year project, begun in February 2005 with a donor budget of US\$2,396,027, aimed to revive the national seed multiplication capability that had been destroyed during the war. The pre-war effort was supported by Germany through a Seed Multiplication Project that had begun in 1974; Germany financed the new project for implementation by FAO. The project had been scheduled for a mid-term evaluation at the time of the present country evaluation; it was thus decided to include the project evaluation as part of the overall exercise.
163. The evaluation found that in less than two years the project had made considerable progress in improving coordination in the seed sector and increasing capacity for seed production and dissemination. Two seed centres have been rehabilitated instead of one as planned and, despite lack of vehicles and personnel, seed multiplication for rice and other crops is being revived. Cassava multiplication is also being carried out. An increasing number of farm families are getting benefits by using certified machine processed seed rice.
164. Although the project has been successful in a technical sense, it is not yet operating on a cost-recovery basis. Cassava multiplication is being done as a free service. In

addition, payment is still outstanding for 400 mt of machine-processed seed rice that was released in June 2006 to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security. This has led to lack of liquidity of the Seed Multiplication Unit. Unless immediate payment is effected, no seed rice can be bought from the farmers and the Unit cannot produce further. The seed supply for the coming season cannot be produced and the continuation of the programme is in doubt unless immediate payment is made¹⁹. In addition, the regular, timely payment of salaries for counterpart staff has not yet been assumed by the Government. Given these operational difficulties, the future sustainability of the Seed Multiplication Unit is questionable at this point.

165. Operational difficulties should be addressed by establishing the Seed Multiplication Unit as a business enterprise with an independent management. It will also require further investment and additional commercial activities. In particular, more field staff has to be recruited, cost accounting has to be introduced, and capacity building in the farming community for intensive cultivation of crops has to be done to promote a steady increase in commercial demand for certified machine-processed rice seed. The latter would imply creation of a linkage to the Farmers Field School Programme.
166. If the project can be put on a sound operational footing, a second phase of four years (starting February 2008) is recommended, with suggestions to be followed in an extension phase of the seed multiplication project listed in Annex 2.

4.6. Fair Trade

167. Sierra Leone has participated with other countries in West and Central Africa in an effort to obtain fair trade and organic certification for certain export crops in which these countries have comparative advantages in production.
168. Under the project GCP/RAF/389/GER in 2004, in-depth analysis of demand for tropical fair trade and organic products was carried out in five European countries. The study concluded that although no organic or fair trade product is undersupplied, there is a good potential for imports of selected tropical products. The project also surveyed farmer groups and the potential to export organic and fair products in five West African countries: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, Senegal, and Sierra Leone. It has identified seven farmer groups which could export such products if adequate technical assistance and training could be provided. In Sierra Leone, the farmer group selected was *Kpeya Agricultural Enterprises (KAE)*, based in Kenema, comprising some 700 members organised in 7 village groups and dealing pre-dominantly with cocoa.
169. In August 2005, GCP/RAF/404/GER (budget: US\$ 1.822 million over three years) began to provide the operational assistance identified in the previous project. KAE is the largest group supported in any of the participating countries. Some 25 Farmers Field School programmes (ca. 25 members each) have been set up and at least 18 of

¹⁹ During the evaluation, steps were being taken to effect the payment.

- them apparently showed good results. Besides rehabilitation, training has concentrated on technical measures (e.g. pruning, shading, crop protection in accordance with criteria for organic production, drying, storing, etc.) for higher quantities and better quality cocoa. A manual on good practices is about to be issued.
170. Besides the technical assistance, the project supplements the salaries of KAE management until exports generate enough income and will finance the major part of inspection and certification costs in the first two years.
 171. A problem for KAE is competition from cocoa traders who buy crops in advance during the 'hunger period' when cash is most needed, at very unfavourable terms for the farmer. This practise, which limits cocoa to be delivered to KAE after harvest, is against KAE regulations but has been tolerated by management so far. To discourage these practices, KAE should be in a position to offer farmers access to advance payments under fair conditions. This would also curb farmers' requests for a full distribution of sales proceeds, allowing management to accumulate some basic savings for operational costs and necessary investments. But KAE does not yet have a business plan and farmers are apparently wary of leaving funds with the management. Many collapses of cooperative societies in the past were due to lack of transparency and accountability of management.
 172. At present, there is actually a high demand for organic- and fair-trade-certified cocoa which is expected to continue. Because KAE-members have not used any chemical inputs for years, the fields could be certified organic with a shortened conversion period (normally 3 years). Similarly, because KAE is a farmer-owned organisation with a democratic decision-making structure, it qualifies for fair-trade certification but has to considerably enhance organisational structures required for tracing the origin of the product under fair trade conditions.
 173. The first container with cocoa was shipped to Europe in mid-February 2007. KAE-management has experienced now for the first time all steps for an overseas shipment including purchasing, quality control, packaging, transporting, negotiating with exporter, getting clearance, regulations governing payment, etc.
 174. The certification process, both for organic and fair-trade produce handling, has been initiated (clearance will last till 2008). Certification would give KAE access to a niche market with higher prices being paid. Furthermore, experience has shown that once one group is certified organic and/or fair-trade in a country, it functions as an example for other groups. Moreover, certification bodies and inspectors get to know the country; with more groups applying for certification inspection visits could be combined to reduce costs; and eventually certification bodies may start training local inspectors. The project has the potential for important catalytic effects in Sierra Leone.
 175. It is unfortunate that the recent Diagnostic Trade Integration Study (DTIS, Nov. 2006) attached no priority to organic and fair trade. However, the study calls for more training in particular in post-harvest treatment of cocoa (fermentation and drying process) –

- which could be even more useful if complemented with the provision of materials on a cost-recovery basis – and suggests importing hybrid cocoa (and oil palm) seedlings.
176. With the emphasis on enhancing tree crop exports MAFS still has to establish a competent focal trade point, caring for organic and/or fair-trade produce at the same time. This unit has to closely link to the Ministry of Trade and Industries (MTI) playing the decisive role in the country's import/export affairs.
 177. It is too early to assess the eventual success of the project, but it seems promising if KAE can successfully compete for its own members' crops against the cocoa traders and if its management can develop the skills and trust to service the members effectively. It could then serve as a model for other organisations in Sierra Leone also seeking fair trade and organic certification.

4.7. Telefood Projects

178. An evaluation of Telefood (TFD) projects was undertaken because of the large number of such projects (27 during the evaluation period) and to augment the evidence base with respect to the conclusions of the corporate evaluation of TFD undertaken in 2005. For this purpose eleven projects were visited by an international and a national evaluator. TFD projects in Sierra Leone have an average budget of US\$ 6,000.
179. This evaluation found that only 20% of the projects had clearly positive impact and that the sustainability of the projects was generally low (the evaluation of Telefood projects is in Annex 4). Projects with livestock components were particularly unsuccessful, either because of management requirements or, in the case of poultry, because of concerns about avian flu. Projects tended to operate in isolation and did not benefit from strategic linkages with other FAO programmes, other international development partners or with the government; thus they were not part of broader efforts for poverty eradication. Only in one case was there evidence of linkages to the FFS.
180. The absence of technical support was one of the main causes of project failure. TFD implementation arrangements preclude the use of funds for capacity building, an area where FAO has a major comparative advantage.
181. No in-depth assessment was done for project appraisal and selection of beneficiaries was in some cases inappropriate. When projects failed, intended beneficiaries were sometimes left with nothing, if they did not have resources to re-start the enterprise. Quality and timeliness of input delivery was not always satisfactory, however this was not a major factor in determining project results. The evaluation found that a rather high percentage of project budgets was used for building materials. In the absence of funds for this, project monitoring and follow-up were not carried out.
182. The evaluation in Sierra Leone thus validates the recommendation of the TFD corporate evaluation that TFD funds should support clearly identified components of

wider FAO projects and programmes, where they can be better targeted and monitored and fully meet the criteria of addressing the needs of the poor.

183. In the case of Sierra Leone, the evaluation recommended that TFD projects be linked to FFS and FFS District Networks, in order to have better access to capacity building and advice.

4.8. Other Areas

4.8.1. Fisheries

184. During the evaluation period, no national projects were implemented in Sierra Leone exclusively in fisheries. However, one project (OSRO/SIL/401/SWE) brought together three Ministries (Agriculture, Fisheries and Youth) and one component supported nine youth groups with a fishing boat, motor and gear. This component was considered to be successful. One group visited by the evaluation had continued its fishing operations. The boat and engine, serviced every three months, were in good repair and the group had purchased a fish smoker for adding value. However, the cost of assistance per beneficiary is much higher in fisheries rather than crop-based rehabilitation projects. In the case of the group visited, there were 35 members and the boat, engine and gear cost about US\$22,000 in total.
185. The Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources (MFNR) would like to increase its cooperation with FAO, but so far this has been constrained by a lack of funding. During the evaluation period, FAO assisted with the preparation of an Interim Fisheries Policy of Sierra Leone, which was adopted by Cabinet in August 2003. The Fisheries Policy has four overall objectives:
- To improve national nutrition and food security through responsible fishing and the reduction of spoilage and wastage
 - To increase employment opportunities
 - To raise the socioeconomic status of the people in the fisheries sector including women; and
 - To improve the skills of the fishing communities and increase export earnings.
186. The policy states that planning is to be based on sound ecological principles, maintenance and enhancement of marine and fresh water fishing resources, conservation of natural heritage, cooperation with international organisations, the establishment of training and research in fisheries matters and improvement of access to financial resources for stakeholders in the fisheries sector.
187. Sierra Leone would now like to develop an overall Master Plan for Fisheries and Aquaculture. Aquaculture has become more a priority as marine fishing productivity has dropped. A TCP proposal for assistance to aquaculture has recently been prepared. A project for youth in fisheries was also prepared in 2004, building on the Swedish-funded emergency project mentioned above that included a similar

component. The proposal was submitted (on an informal basis) to Germany as a potential donor but not funded.

188. Sierra Leone participates through the Director of Fisheries in regional fisheries bodies meetings. It has also participated in meetings on the Code of Conduct and the Sustainable Fisheries Livelihoods Development Programme (SFLP), although no country-based activities were implemented under the Programme.
189. The main challenges facing the fisheries sector are protection of marine resources from illegal fishing, absence of infrastructure (harbours, roads, electricity) and development of opportunities for inland fisheries and aquaculture.

4.8.2. Forestry

190. Neither have there been any forestry project-related activities in Sierra Leone during the evaluation period. However, a few other initiatives, mainly in the area of policy, have been undertaken:

Forestry Policy Review in Sierra Leone

191. In October 2003, following a request by the Government, a draft Forest and Wildlife Policy was prepared by an FAO National Consultant. The draft was subsequently endorsed at a Stakeholder Workshop held in Freetown on 14 May 2004. This document, however, has not yet been transformed into a Policy Document, nor integrated into the Agricultural Policy of the country. It consists of summarized objectives and strategies and does not contain analysis of alternatives, nor justification for strategies recommended. As such, it is of limited utility.

Establishment of a National Commission on the Environment and Forestry

192. In October 2005, responding to a request by the Government, FAO, UNDP, UNEP and UNHABITAT fielded a joint mission to the country. The draft mission report has served in the preparation of a draft Strategic Action Plan for the National Commission on Environment and Forestry.

Diagnostic Trade Integrated Study (DTIS) in Sierra Leone

193. FAO participated in a World Bank initiative on Diagnostic Trade Integrated Study (DTIS) in the country. Upon request by the Bank, FAO prepared Terms of Reference for a national consultant to prepare a forestry component to the main DTIS in Sierra Leone. The consultant report assessed the actual and potential external trade in non-traditional forest products for the country.
194. Major expressed needs in forestry include wildlife and protected area management, bush fire control, mangrove protection and watershed management.

4.9. Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP)

195. During the review period, eight TCP projects were implemented in Sierra Leone. Of these, three are considered to be emergency projects (one of which, for quality rice seed production, had a development aspect), two were the FAO contributions to joint efforts with other UN agencies or bilateral donors (for the Agricultural Sector Review and Operation Feed The Nation). One of the other projects (CAADP support) was identical in design and concept to those implemented in all other AU-member countries. The other projects were for training of disabled people and for preparation of a project²⁰.
196. FAO's Field Programme Management Information System (FPMIS) indicates that Sierra Leone is a participant in several regional TCPs. However, these projects are support to African regional or sub-regional organisations and there is no information about how Sierra Leone particularly benefits from these. They were thus not considered in this evaluation.
197. The most successful use of the TCP was for the Agricultural Sector Review and up-scaling of Operation Feed The Nation. As was noted earlier, the Agricultural Sector Review and Agricultural Development Strategy, co-funded with UNDP, the World Bank and IFAD, were important policy outputs in which FAO played a key and decisive role. The up-scaling of OFTN, with funding also by a GCP project with Germany and a UNDP project, seems to be on its way to establishing a new and more promising extension method to be applied in Sierra Leone. Financing for a much expanded programme of Farmers' Field Schools is now being sought.
198. The emergency projects were considered to be an appropriate use of TCP funds. However, there is little information about the results of these projects. Production data for the final reports is based on assumptions rather than actual performance. Project TCP/SIL/0167 "Emergency Support to Quality Seed Production" was deemed valuable as it took place at a time when the national capability to produce certified seed was at its lowest ebb. This was the first step toward rebuilding quality seed production in the country, which is now continuing through GCP/SIL/023/GER.
199. The CAADP support project took place at an opportune time in Sierra Leone, having been approved just as the Agricultural Sector Review and Development Strategy was being brought to a conclusion. Thus, there was an opportunity to achieve synergy between investment plans and sector priorities. But the National Medium-Term Investment Programme never was officially endorsed as such and the bankable projects prepared under the TCP have not attracted donor interest, at least as yet.
200. The project for disabled people was not well conceived and although it addressed a large and highly vulnerable target beneficiary group, it ultimately did not produce many lasting benefits. This was despite a considerable amount of interest shown in the

²⁰ Another project, TCP/SIL/3101 "Land Use Planning for Optimizing Agricultural Production", was approved during the review period, but as the inception mission for this project was in May-June 2006, it was deemed too early in the implementation process to include it. Two other projects were approved just before the mission began.

- project, including by the lead technical division. The project did not lead to the development of a strategy for addressing these beneficiaries nor to any follow-up programmes or activities. The food processing activities were clearly not sustainable, as the disabled people operating on a very small scale could not profitably compete against bigger and better organized businesses. As a result, the involved organisations for disabled people continue to seek donor assistance for group support.
201. TCP funding was also used for a few small activities. TCP/SIL/2801 prepared an assessment of the functional status of veterinary labs in the country and requirements for their rehabilitation, including training needs. The output was a project proposal costed at US\$3 million that was not funded. The TCP facility for FAORs (TCP/SIL/2802 and 3002) was used to carry out a technical assessment of the state of tree crop plantations (2802) and produce a Crop Production Manual (3002) containing guidelines for improved crop production and post harvest practices for technical extension staff. The tree crop assessment report and crop production guidelines were distributed to Government departments and NGOs in hard copy and CD-ROM. Plans were made to develop simplified extension pamphlets from the Crop Production Manual for Farmer Facilitators of FFS and farmers generally, but this had not yet been done.
202. Overall performance of the TCP in Sierra Leone over the review period is judged to be above satisfactory, with two of the non-emergency projects deemed clearly successful and two unsuccessful. In the absence of more information about the actual recipients of emergency rehabilitation assistance, it is not possible to make an informed judgement on the overall utility of these particular projects. However, the innovative nature of project TCP/SIL/0167 is to be commended and thus leads to an overall judgement of “above satisfactory” for the programme as a whole in the evaluation period. The use of TCP in the Agricultural Sector Review was particularly strategic, as without it, FAO would have been unable to play the leading role that it did in its implementation. Using TCP for “buy-in” to key national policy-making processes is extremely effective and the TCP Unit should be prepared to respond to such requests, if technically sound, in a rapid fashion.
203. Assuming that recommendations are accepted for the development of a national priority framework for Sierra Leone, efforts in the medium-term should be focused on developing sound technical proposals in close consultation with potential funders and thus a higher likelihood of follow-up. This will clearly require a greater level of technical support from the FAO Representation and others units, as need may be.

4.10. Cross-cutting Issues

204. The major cross-cutting issues (environment, gender, HIV/AIDS) were little addressed by FAO during the evaluation period, but neither were they ignored. None of the project activities had a strong emphasis in these areas, although there is scope for addressing them more comprehensively in the future.

4.10.1. Environment

205. Section 2.1.3. mentions some of the most critical environmental problems facing Sierra Leone, none of which were extensively addressed by FAO during the evaluation period. As was mentioned above, FAO involvement in the forestry sector was very slight. Perhaps the main achievement was in the area of organic farming, which FAO was promoting through the German-funded regional project on fair trade and organic production.
206. The evaluation has suggested that FAO has a stronger role to play in terms of environmental protection in Sierra Leone and has identified this as a priority area for the future, because of the strong linkage to soil fertility and consequent agricultural production and food security. FFS should be the key mechanism for delivering messages at field level in this area. As FAO does not have its own financial resources, its role will necessarily be in terms of advocacy and awareness-raising of environmental problems and their linkage with food security and resource mobilization.

4.10.2. Gender Equity

207. Section 2.1 of the report includes some of the main gender issues in rural development, including the increased number of female-headed households, higher illiteracy level for women and restricted opportunities. Within FFS, there has been a noticeable effort in “affirmative action” to include women as members. This has been a positive development; however, the impact study of FFS found that women tended to be absent more frequently from FFS sessions than men, probably due to duties such as child and family care. Nonetheless, women seemed to be at least as innovative as men when it came to new agricultural practices. The mission is less sanguine about the prospects of introducing value-added activities for women and youth, due to general difficulties with accessing markets, but this would have to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Gender issues, health and nutrition, and literacy are important focus areas of the RCPRP and ASREP projects and should continue to be covered in any large scaling-up of FFS. Again, FAO may need to play a key advocacy role, particularly in the strongly male-dominated MAFS.

4.10.3. HIV/AIDS

208. According to a population-based survey, conducted in June 2005 by UNAIDS, HIV-prevalence had increased to 1.53% from 0.9% in 2002, ranging from 2.1% in the urban areas to 1.3% in the rural areas. Widespread poverty and high unemployment rates, in particular with youths and young adults, and the breakdown of the extended family structure are contributing factors to increased infection risks. Misinformation, denial and stigmatisation are dominating rural life, making it hard for infected people to receive the necessary care. Particularly in rural areas, people are said to avoid speaking about this issue. At central Government level, all ministries are supposed to have HIV/AIDS focal points. MAFS has one that is not active due to lack of funds; MFMR does not. In general, a workplace policy programme in ministries does not exist.

209. Within the 'UN-family' UNAIDS has pushed the HIV/AIDS issue in UNDAF and FAO support for this was acknowledged. However, HIV/AIDS-mainstreaming was not a theme in projects, including FFS. FAO did organise two workshops for agricultural extension facilitators/staff in 2004 as an *ad hoc* activity with financing by UNAIDS. On paper, FAOR has a workplace policy but there is no HIV/AIDS focal point in the office.
210. Utilising concepts developed by FAO Headquarters and with technical support from UNAIDS, there is definitely scope for HIV/AIDS-mainstreaming in general and for including modules on HIV/AIDS within FFS in particular. This has to be accompanied by advice how the taboo which dominates this area could be overcome. Agricultural development could be made instrumental in mitigation efforts, including introduction of labour-saving crops and technologies.
211. Here, also food security comes into play as a healthy body is the best way resisting both negative HIV/AIDS impacts and treatment effects, thus, probably leading to a prolonged life. A higher emphasis on nutritional advice offered to women and particularly to mothers caring for babies and children could yield beneficial results. The tragedy, however, lies in the fact that poor people fighting for daily survival usually have a poor health status.

5. Results by FAO Services

212. The terms of reference for the evaluation call for an examination of whether FAO has a comparative advantage in Sierra Leone (from substantive, quality and cost points of view) for delivering the various types of services rendered by the Organisation. The main types of services rendered by FAO are analysed below.

5.1. Sharing and Applying Knowledge

213. FAO's knowledge sharing work happens mostly through pilot activities of methods that may have been tried in other countries, to determine after appropriate adaptation, whether they are suitable for Sierra Leone; and through FAO's global information services provided under the Regular Programme.

5.1.1. Pilot Activities

214. FAO did not engage in a wide variety of pilot activities. The outstanding example, and the one which is cited often in this evaluation, is the Farmers' Field Schools. Although FFS are hardly new, they were introduced by FAO for the first time in Sierra Leone. FFS show considerable promise as an extension delivery method. The use of FFS plots for the economic benefit of participants was found to be a successful approach to improving agriculture among small-scale farmers in the Sierra Leone social context as it builds on the tradition of farmers working cooperatively. The early steps in the development of FFS in Sierra Leone, through the SPFS, involved sharing of experience from Ghana and Uganda. The FFS methodology has now been picked up by NGOs, other internationally-funded development projects (IFAD and ADB) and in the FAO/German regional project on organic and fair trade certification.
215. The use of TCP for initial rehabilitation of rice seed production was also innovative, although no data was collected from the beneficiaries to confirm the production assumptions made.
216. A less successful example was the attempt to create a Right-to-Food Secretariat. Originally set up with ambitious targets and poorly resourced, the future of the institution is in serious doubt without further external funding.

5.1.2. Use of FAO Regular Programme Products

217. Sierra Leone is one of the world's least developed countries, with poor communications infrastructure. A consequence in the digital age is that there is very little familiarity with the global information services of FAO, unless they are directly related to projects being implemented in the country. Sierra Leone does participate in FAO meetings for which funding is provided. These are perceived as useful for maintaining international contacts and keeping abreast of current ideas. However, through its interviews the

mission could find little evidence of use of FAO guidelines, methodologies and data bases in Sierra Leone, again unless it was connected with projects²¹.

218. While access to FAO materials are an issue, there is also a problem that the FAO Representation has little knowledge about the vast store of material being produced by FAO and thus its possible application for Sierra Leone and there is presently no satisfactory tool for increasing this knowledge. More significant is the capacity issue, in a country where problems are many and solutions (including funding for them) are often lacking. In such circumstances, most FAO Regular Programme outputs are not seen as relevant, without implementation assistance.

5.2. Partnership Building

219. FAO interacts with a broad range of partners in Sierra Leone, including Government, members of the UN family, donors, NGOs and civil society organisations. The work on partnership building was largely carried out during the evaluation period by the FAO Representative.
220. FAO is considered to be a trusted partner by the Government and the Representation has built linkages, including with the most senior decision-makers. FAO, thus, enjoys a high profile in the country, perhaps higher than in most countries. The Organization is often recognized in speeches by the President. The FAO Representative enjoyed considerable access to policy makers and was often consulted on policy matters. It is to be hoped that the quality of the Representation will be maintained in the future, so that this kind of relationship can be re-established.
221. FAO during the evaluation period was also a key and respected member of the UNCT. This was made unanimously clear by all members of the UN family consulted by the evaluation. The FAO Representative served as the UN Resident Coordinator, a.i. on a number of occasions. He regularly attended the weekly meetings of UN Agency Heads, the monthly meetings of the Donor Forum (chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator) and the quarterly meetings of the Development Partnership Aid Coordination Committee (DPAC), set up to monitor the flow of development assistance and implementation of agreed projects under the chairmanship of the Vice-President.
222. FAO partnered with various agencies particularly on the agricultural sector review and agricultural development strategy (with UNDP, World Bank and IFAD), OFTN/FFS (with UNDP) and on the food security strategy (with WFP and CORAD). It was instrumental in the inclusion of food security as Pillar II of the PRSP and as one of the priorities for the UNDAF. The fact of the President's food security pledge in 2002 made for a

²¹ A positive example is the wide distribution of the ESC manual "Regulations, Standards and Certification for Agricultural Export" in connection with project GCP/RAF/404/GER "Increasing Incomes of Small Farmers through Exports of Organic and Fair Trade Tropical Products".

- congruence of priorities between FAO and the Government, which was then taken up by the UN family as a whole.
223. Partnership with NGOs has largely been with CORAD²². CORAD was formed in 2003 and focuses its efforts on five particularly vulnerable districts: Kano, Kailahun, Bonte, Tonkolili and Koinadugu. Collaboration has taken place on FFS and on the Agricultural Sector Review and Development Strategy, the National Food Security Strategy and National Food Aid Strategy. CORAD also cooperates with FAO on the seed multiplication project, which CORAD itself sees as very successful. FAO also cooperated effectively with the Movement for Assistance and Promotion of Rural Communities (MAPCO) on training of disabled people in blacksmithing and food processing.
224. Civil society groups are not generally strong in Sierra Leone but one key group with which FAO had interaction was the National Association of Farmers of Sierra Leone (NAFSL), an advocacy group that is the leading non-state actor in the agricultural sector. FAO was given much of the credit for mediating between NAFSL and MAFS at various times in the evaluation period, and NAFSL was considered to be a key partner for carrying the message about the President's pledge and with seed policy development.
225. Overall, FAO has been an important and active partner in the development community in Sierra Leone. It has been perhaps less in contact with the donor community, which is discussed more below.

5.3. Capacity Building

226. Building capacity in Sierra Leone is particularly challenging. Within the UN system and among donors and NGOs, lack of capacity is universally cited as an obstacle to sustainable development interventions. While nearly all FAO interventions (except Telefood projects) have a capacity building component, they are invariably small, often of too short duration and thus have only limited impact.
227. Of the interventions evaluated, the Right-to-Food project was the most deficient in balancing capacity building needs with appropriate strengthening activities. There was an unstated assumption to the project that institutional capacity existed for an operational secretariat and this proved not to be the case. None of the FAO interventions in the review period were long enough in relation to capacity building needs. It remains to be seen whether there will be another phase to the seed multiplication project, and if financing will be found for scaling up FFS in Operation Feed The Nation, where there are profound capacity building requirements.

²² Consortium for Rehabilitation and Development, a group consisting of international NGOs (i.e. Catholic Relief Services, CARE, World Vision, AFRICARE) largely funded by USAID in Sierra Leone.

228. In an LDC emerging from civil war like Sierra Leone, capacity building efforts, particularly when directed at strengthening government institutions, are often compromised by the intense battle for a commodity in short supply - qualified staff - when the government is the least competitive from a remunerative point of view. Thus, trained and qualified staff often leave for employment in the private sector, with international organisations or with international NGOs. A related problem is that when projects end, staff who are able to do so seek other employment in the international sphere, with adverse consequences for the activity with which they were previously associated. In Sierra Leone, this is what happened in the Right-to-Food project.
229. As FAO is not a funding agency, its possibilities for carrying out extensive capacity building will always be constrained. Accordingly, it may be able to make a greater impact through assessments of capacity building needs in particular areas and make this information available to Government and Development Partners. Such assessments should take into account capacities outside of government. In Sierra Leone, this would usually mean NGOs and to a much more limited extent, the private sector. At the same time, FAOR should create awareness among Government, donors, NGOs and private sector about FAO training materials and facilitate their dissemination. Co-funding arrangements and public-private partnerships for capacity building activities should be sought.

5.4. Resource Mobilisation

230. Here resource mobilisation is intended in the broad sense, i.e. for the agriculture sector in general, not just for FAO. FAO was not notably successful in this area during the evaluation period. Despite the Presidential pledge, the Maputo Declaration, the goals of the PRSP and the agricultural and food security strategies developed, the amounts of national and international resources directed to agriculture remains below expectations. Government resources for agriculture, although increased over the evaluation period, remain less than half the Maputo Declaration target. The major donors in the country have given emphasis to sectors other than agriculture and investment projects in agriculture, even when identified, have been very slow to come on line. There have not been any sector-wide programmes, so projects remain the form for international assistance. Private sector investment in agriculture remains very weak.
231. The relative lack of donors present in the country has been identified by the evaluation as a difficulty for FAO. Many bilateral programmes now have decentralized responsibilities for decisions on assistance programmes. Perhaps because of its size and recent history, donors have been slow to return to the country. Many of the donors that are active in other African countries are simply not present in Sierra Leone.
232. One of the largest donors present in Sierra Leone is the EC, but the post to head the Rural Development section was vacant for some two years. Having been recently filled, the EC would likely now be seeking to revive its assistance in rural areas. However, in the continuing absence of an FAO Representative, there is no interlocutor.

233. As was noted earlier, the FAO Investment Centre has prepared some projects that have been financed and others (through the NEPAD-CAADP TCP) that have not. FAO has also been highly supportive of Government efforts to secure funding for a major scaling-up of Operation Feed The Nation, but this has been going slowly and will likely take some time.
234. In terms of projects implemented through FAO, this will be a major challenge for the new FAOR. Only one national donor-funded project (Seeds) is currently operational (the Sierra Leone component of the regional organic/fair trade project is also still operating). Nearly all the previous bilateral support was from Germany through its Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture, and Consumer Protection; their interest in future activities is uncertain.

6. Conclusions and Major Recommendations

6.1. Conclusions

235. The evaluation covered a time period of great change in Sierra Leone as the country was in an immediate post-conflict situation. Indeed, this was a key reason for choosing Sierra Leone for a country evaluation in the first place. As a result, the FAO assistance to the country changed considerably over the time frame, from emergency rehabilitation assistance to planning and post-conflict development.
236. The evaluation report has presented FAO's work over the evaluation period and commented on many aspects of it. The evaluation now looks generally at the performance of FAO's cooperation against evaluation criteria.
237. **Relevance of interventions and coherence of strategy:** During the evaluation period, there was no overall framework to provide a basis for FAO support to Sierra Leone. This is understandable for some of the period, as the country was emerging from civil war when "normal" development assistance was not possible. The first step was a proper one – to develop strategies for agriculture and rural development and FAO was instrumental in this. These initial interventions were highly relevant and brought considerable credit to FAO. Subsequently, in the period when strategy implementation began, FAO undertook activities for which donor funding (from Germany) was available. All these areas were identified as important, but so were many others. FAO should have more explicitly identified areas of its comparative advantage and sought partners for assisting in these areas. This was not done and is the subject of a key recommendation of this evaluation.
238. **Efficiency:** The mission has interpreted this as referring to the FAO office in the country. Ideally, FAO's costs would have been benchmarked against those of other agencies operating in the country, but this would have required cooperation that was not sought and resources that were not available. However, the mission's view is that FAO's overall efficiency can be improved, but it would entail investment costs that FAO has been unwilling to make. The most noteworthy example is local salaries. By international standards, salaries in Sierra Leone are low. However, FAO pays at the lowest end of the international agencies. Thus, as was documented in section 3, it has a hard time retaining capable staff. In other words, FAO is "penny-wise and pound foolish". Resources are undependable and Regular Budget allocations are insufficient to support the office, particularly the programme function. As a result, resources tend to be spent when available, a classic symptom of poverty that affects organizations as well. The mission's overall assessment is that FAO needs to improve on efficiency, but it is operating in a very difficult environment.
239. **Effectiveness:** FAO has a relatively small number of cooperative activities in Sierra Leone and the picture with regard to their effectiveness is mixed. There is not enough information about all the emergency rehabilitation activities to make a firm overall judgement, particularly on the seeds and tools distribution interventions. Some of the

interventions were catalytic (seed production, youth employment). Quality of policy assistance was strongest in the agricultural sector, compared to forestry or fisheries. However, the expectations from support to the Right-to-Food Secretariat were unrealistic. On the other hand, very good work was done in terms of establishing Farmers' Field Schools under Operation Feed The Nation, using a concept that was well-suited to Sierra Leonean conditions. Capacity building, while generally present in FAO activities, has been insufficient to create the necessary critical mass. More capacity building seems always to be required.

240. **Impact:** The impact studies carried out at field level have shown that FFS farmers have increased production and incomes more than non-FFS farmers, that their agricultural production methods and systems have been influenced and they are more aware. They also have more problems marketing, which leads to indications of need for future support. There seems to be clear support for further expansion of FFS and if funding is found, it is likely to have a considerable positive impact over time. Emergency assistance was shown in the impact studies to be generally appreciated and beneficial, but the levels of support were generally not enough to restore livelihoods fully to previous levels. Some FAO pilot activities have had positive impact on small groups of beneficiaries (fair trade cocoa, youth in fishing and agriculture) but follow-up investment has been limited, at least to the time of the evaluation.
241. **Sustainability:** In Sierra Leone, under the present economic circumstances, with 60% of the Government budget coming from foreign aid, continued external support is a precondition for sustainability of results of most programmes. FAO, which does not have its own funds, must seek continuing assistance for those activities deemed to be successful in a timely manner. It also needs to sensitize donors to the realities of institutional support in Sierra Leone. Grassroots efforts, if demonstrating benefits, are more likely to be sustainable in the current climate. For example, FFS groups that have been formed see benefits from their participation and the vast majority of members want to continue. However, even these activities require seed money to be launched.

6.2. General Recommendations

242. Within the context of these overall findings, the mission makes the following recommendations:

243. **Framework for FAO support:** As was mentioned above, the evaluation sees the need for more explicit priorities in terms of areas covered and services to be provided, assessing the possible contribution of other partners and identifying FAO's comparative advantages. The process should be country-driven, but will require adequate support from and interaction with FAO. Establishment of a priority framework should be a first order of business in the work programme of a new FAO Representative.

Recommendation 1: A rolling FAO national priority framework should be developed with government and donors (as appropriate), supported as necessary by FAO technical and policy inputs. It may cover a period of four years. It should define flexibly the FAO priorities in support to national strategies, including revisions to the PRSP. The priority framework should be rolling and reviewed periodically - every 1-2 years. It should specify intended outcomes, but not be tied down in the form of projects or programmes for implementation.

244. **Advocating food security:** Within the process of preparing the priority framework, the evaluation endorses that the overarching importance of improving food security as the main priority for FAO in Sierra Leone. Food security usually is defined by three components: production/availability; access; and utilisation. The primary concern of agricultural development is production, taking into account the natural endowment of a country. However, rarely is self-sufficiency in staple foods the best option a country should follow; rather international comparative advantages should determine the macro-economic development pattern bringing in trade of agricultural produce as a crucial factor. When subsistence level is not assured – 74% of SiL's population is rated poor to very poor – access to food is dependent on the purchasing power available. At household (micro-) level proper utilisation of food (including safe water) coupled with application of hygiene and sanitation standards are crucial factors for the health status.

Recommendation 2: With preparations for PRSP Phase II (2008-10) having started, FAO should advocate a continued orientation on food security in all its dimensions; participate in technical working (sub-)groups related to food security; and contribute to a better understanding of the multi-faceted character of food security by officials and the public.

245. **Policy Advice:** As noted previously, Sierra Leone has considerable capacity constraints for harmonising concrete actions with overall policy directives. Statistics, planning and monitoring and evaluation are key areas requiring improvement. There is

a need for sound advice, giving policy options with pros and cons, so that the implications of measures are better understood before they are implemented. Because of its neutrality and expertise, FAO enjoys a comparative advantage in supplying this. However, the FAO Representation does not, and will not in the foreseeable future, have the capacity to give this advice at the level and with the frequency required. The FAO Sub-regional and Regional Offices and Headquarters cannot be mobilized with the frequency and intensity of support needed.

Recommendation 3: A key priority for FAO in future should be assistance in agricultural policy and strategy development, linked to investment mobilization (see Recommendations 4 and 5). Coordination and donor liaison should be a key part of this. Support to monitoring and evaluation in MAFS is a key need. Because of limited numbers of qualified staff available to address key policy issues relating to agriculture and rural development in Sierra Leone, FAO should seek to place long-term experts in key advisory positions if appropriate funding mechanisms are available. Additional funding should be made available to draw on short-term technical expertise as required.

246. **Policy support to agriculture as a business:** It is Government policy that agriculture should be conducted as a business. At the level of the small producer, it implies that he/she has the information to judge whether or not an agricultural enterprise is sufficiently profitable. It also implies macro-level policies that allow Sierra Leonean farmers to compete on an equitable basis, without market distortions caused by policy decisions that hamper food security objectives or force farmers out of agriculture.

Recommendation 4: FAO should provide support at policy level and appropriate training at national and district level aimed at elucidating better understanding of the economic background of production and promoting agriculture as a profitable business to agricultural producers in Sierra Leone, thus enhancing the appeal of agriculture as a means of livelihood. A key part would aim at creating an effective legal framework (e.g. market reforms, appropriate trade regulations; land tenure; micro-credits). This support should aim at ensuring that agricultural enterprises, when undertaken, represent an acceptable return on investment.

247. **Policy support to sustainable agriculture and natural resource management:** Among the problems facing Sierra Leone agriculture are poor soil fertility, environmental degradation caused by destruction of bush and forest cover and inadequate use of available water resources. Population increase and consequent food demand are placing greater stress on the traditional bush fallow system in the uplands. While these problems have been identified before, they seem poorly understood and relatively little has been done to address them.

Recommendation 5: FAO should provide policy support aimed at the practice of sustainable agriculture, including measures to increase soil fertility, enhance environmental protection and use more effectively existing water resources.

248. **Capacity in the FAOR:** DGB 2007/04 has given FAO Representatives lead responsibility for managing the project cycle from project formulation, through implementation to closure. However the new staffing profile for FAO in Sierra Leone does not provide the necessary support. Recent staffing decisions do not recognize the level and volume of work undertaken by the programme unit. It raises the likelihood of continued high staff turnover in this unit, the need for continuous staff training at entry level, and consequently a lower level of efficiency than is required to ensure growth in the field programme and its effective management. Savings from the restructuring may neither offset the cost of constantly replacing trained staff nor repair the damage to the Organisation's image caused by inadequate staffing capacity.

Recommendation 6: To enable the Representation fulfil its mandate and to implement the activities indicated, it must be given adequate resources to carry out the tasks. OCD and the new FAO Representative should review the staffing profile of the office to ensure the programme unit is adequately resourced.

249. **SPFS and Farmers' Field Schools:** Farmers' Field Schools have been introduced successfully in Sierra Leone since 2003. First introduced through the SPFS, they have grown in Sierra Leone through funding support by FAO TCP, UNDP, the German Government and now increasingly by NGOs. Farmers are enthusiastic about FFS and see good results from their participation thus far. There is demand from rural communities to further expand them. The Government hopes to attract major funding for scaling up the FFS in the near future.

Recommendation 7: FFS should continue to develop as a primary device in future for channelling services and information to Sierra Leone farmers and FAO should build on the success by continuing technical support for their development. However, scaling up should not proceed at a pace faster than can be supported by quality facilitation. Facilitator training, whether farmers, extensionists or others, will still require major investment.

250. **Cross-cutting issues:** While some work has been done on key cross-cutting issues like environment, gender and HIV/AIDS, these remain important priority areas in Sierra Leone that should be specifically considered in the preparation of a national priority framework (see recommendations 1 and 5). As has been done in the RCPRP and ASREP projects, HIV/AIDS-mitigation should be a consideration in the development of curricula for FFS.

Recommendation 8: Specific consideration should be given in the national priority framework to cross-cutting issues such as environment, gender equity and HIV/AIDS. Together with MAFS, the National Farmers Association, and civil society agriculture-led HIV/AIDS-mitigation strategies at community level should be developed in the context of expansion of FFS in Sierra Leone.

6.3. Sector-specific Recommendations

251. Seeds

Recommendation 9: If the present financial crisis for the seed multiplication-project (GCP/SIL/023/GER) is resolved immediately, a second phase of four years for the project should be approved. The expected outputs would be:

- An entity, structured like a private enterprise, with annual business report that indicates a positive development of the profit and loss calculation.
- Development programmes financed by special budgets in order to make use of the agricultural expertise of the Seed Multiplication Unit staff for training linkages to farmers field schools.
- Policy guidelines aiming at the establishment of a market mechanism supporting a price stabilising system for locally produced rice.

Detailed recommendations are included in Annex 2.

252. Right-to-Food

Recommendation 10: Although not within a project framework, FAO should continue technical assistance to the Sierra Leone Right-to-Food Secretariat, with a view toward building institutional linkages for creating awareness about the Right-to-Food at grassroots level, including with Operation Feed The Nation, and establishment of monitoring mechanisms to assess progress. Detailed recommendations are included in Annex 3.

253. Fair Trade

Recommendation 11: Within the Sierra Leone component of the existing regional project GCP/RAF/404/GER, the management of Kpeya Agricultural Enterprises should be assisted in elaborating business plans and cost-effectiveness measures, including a strategy for phasing out subsidies to management salaries; to further FFS-activities for members, including post-harvest treatment training with support from MAFS/MTI; to advise and enable KAE-management to follow-up on possible imports of improved cocoa seedlings; to assist MAFS in setting-up an international trade focal point and to develop links to MTI concerning exports of agricultural produce; and to assist Sierra Leone to gain better access to internationally available data and to technical discussion and reports in WTO.

254. **Recommendations related to Telefood**

Recommendation 12: Telefood funds should be used to support clearly identified components of wider FAO projects and programmes where they can be better targeted and monitored and fully meet the criteria of addressing the needs of the poor. In Sierra Leone, these projects should be linked to FFS. The presence of FFS in the area should be a necessary condition for the eligibility of requests and priority should be given to projects addressing fields where FFS can provide capacity building and advice. Telefood projects should therefore be used to expand FFS to other sectors such as livestock production and aquaculture, thus opening up the FFS to the entire community. These projects should be identified at community level and reviewed by the Telefood Committee in consultation with the National SPFS Coordinator. The linkage of Telefood-projects to the present FFS District Network structure would imply discontinuing the free provision of inputs, in favour a micro-credit model.