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Organization of the United  
Nations

## Office of Evaluation

### *Evaluation of FAO Cooperation in Sri Lanka 2006-2012*

**FINAL REPORT**

22 October 2012

## Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

### Office of Evaluation (OED)

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For further information, please contact:

Director, OED  
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla 1, 00153  
Rome, Italy  
Email: [evaluation@fao.org](mailto:evaluation@fao.org)

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J. Mark Stiles  
Team Leader

## **Composition of the Evaluation Team**

### *Evaluation team*

J. Mark Stiles  
Gowthaman Balachandran  
Lori Bell (FAO Office of Evaluation)  
Ashwin Bhouraskar (FAO Office of Evaluation)  
Tim Leyland  
Herath Manthirithilake  
Isha Miranda  
Mohamed Munas  
Sarath Weerasena

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## **List of Acronyms and Abbreviations**

AsDB	Asian Development Bank
AsDF	Asian Development Fund
CBO	Community-based organization
CCA	Common Country Assessment
CCRF	Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CG	Consultative Group
CHAP	Consolidated Humanitarian Assistance Programme
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CPF	Country Programme Framework
CSO	Civil society organization
DFAR	Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources
DG	Director General
EC	European Commission
ECDPM	European Centre for Development Policy Management
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council of the United Nations
ECTAD	Emergency Centre for Transboundary Animal Diseases
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization (of the United Nations)
FAOR	FAO Representative
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoSL	Government of Sri Lanka
GRMS	Global Resources Management System
HPAI	High Pathogenic Avian Influenza
HQ	Headquarters
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IDP	Internally-displaced person
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFI	International financial institution
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
LEGS	Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards
LIBCO	Livestock Breeders Cooperative Societies
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MD	Millennium Declaration
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MFARD	Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoFP	Ministry of Finance and Planning
NAQDA	National Aquaculture Development Authority
NARA	National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NMTPF	National Medium-term Priority Framework
NPFS	National Programme for Food Security
OED	Office of Evaluation (FAO)
OSD	Office of Support to Decentralization (FAO)
PC	Programme Committee (FAO)

PTF	Presidential Task Force for Northern Recovery
RAP	Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAO)
RBM	Results-based management
SEAGA	Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis
TCD	Technical Cooperation for Development
TCE	Emergency and Rehabilitation Division (FAO)
TCI	Investment Centre (FAO)
TCP	Technical Cooperation Programme projects
TOR	terms of reference
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNOPS	United Nations Office of Project Services
UN-REDD	United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries
USA	United States of America
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

### Map of Sri Lanka





## **Executive Summary**

### ***Introduction***

ES1. The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has been carrying out evaluations of its work in individual countries since 2005. This Sri Lanka country evaluation, conducted in 2012 and covering the period 2006 to 2012, is the 11<sup>th</sup> of its type.

### ***Approach, key questions and methods***

ES2. Designed to be forward-looking, the evaluation sought to answer three over-arching questions:

- How relevant, efficient, effective and sustainable has FAO's work been in Sri Lanka since 2006?
- What difference has FAO made?
- What can be learned that would help to improve FAO's future work in Sri Lanka and elsewhere?

ES3. The evaluation was undertaken by an independent team consisting of four international evaluators and sector specialists and four national specialists under the direction of FAO's Office of Evaluation. Although independent, the team collaborated with FAO staff and its partners in preparing the terms of reference for the evaluation and at the beginning and end through consultative groups established for that purpose in Rome and Colombo.

ES4. The key methodologies consisted of:

- Desk reviews of more than 70 projects, relevant evaluations and background materials, including an impact evaluation of FAO's work in the fisheries sector in Sri Lanka;
- Semi-structured, individual and group interviews with GoSL national, provincial and district GoSL employees (n=103), other internal and external stakeholders at all levels in Sri Lanka (n=77), and with FAO HQ staff (n=38), staff at the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (RAP) (n=20) and FAO staff and consultants in Sri Lanka (n=41);
- Field visits to districts in the north, east, central and north-central areas of Sri Lanka to meet local stakeholders and beneficiaries (n=~200); and
- Discussions with stakeholder consultative group members in Rome (n=21) and Sri Lanka (n=26).

### ***Overview of FAO's work***

ES5. FAO's portfolio of projects in Sri Lanka was relatively small until a tsunami in the Indian Ocean struck in 2004, after which the portfolio grew quickly before slowly diminishing until 2009 when Sri Lanka's civil war ended and several hundred thousand displaced persons began returning to their homes. Programming then grew exponentially in response to the government's resettlement programmes in the north and east. Floods in late 2010 and early 2011 resulted in additional relief efforts. During the period 2006-2011, FAO

implemented 62 country-dedicated projects<sup>1</sup> amounting to USD76.2 million.<sup>2</sup> More than 95 percent of financing for these came via trust funds from FAO's resource partners, with the balance from FAO's regular programme budget, which covers the operating costs of the FAO Representation in Sri Lanka and \$3.8 million of projects under FAO's Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP). Sri Lanka also benefited from FAO's global and regional projects, eight of which the evaluation team reviewed as being most relevant. About 85 percent of all FAO's expenditures in Sri Lanka came under the authority of FAO's Emergency and Rehabilitation Division (TCE) at headquarters in Rome, with the balance under the FAO Representative (FAOR) in Colombo.

ES6. The country evaluation focuses mainly on FAO's projects beginning in 2008 since its projects in response to the 2004 tsunami have been subject to previous evaluations and because the majority of funding 2006-2012 went toward post-conflict recovery initiatives, beginning in 2009.

### ***Programming challenges***

ES7. For much of the period under review, FAO's programming environment in Sri Lanka was challenging. The Government of Sri Lanka's (GoSL) sudden release of internally displaced persons in 2009 required FAO to mobilize resources quickly to support relief and rehabilitation programmes on a large scale. The Presidential Task Force coordinated the planning and implementation of relief and rehabilitation efforts in the Northern Province and in much of the Eastern Province and the military held sway over lists of beneficiaries prepared by government agents at the district level. FAO delivered agricultural supplies, rehabilitated water tanks and strengthened fisheries infrastructure largely through government line departments, whose capacities were over-stretched. The military limited FAO's access to beneficiaries in high security areas and the GoSL prohibited FAO from partnering with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in most resettlement areas until recently, and made it difficult for the FAOR to hire international consultants. The office in Colombo, which at the time was restructuring to combine the emergency programme with FAO's regular programming, was in constant flux, as were government's policies, priorities and senior personnel, making it challenging for FAO to work on long-term development initiatives and policy issues.

### ***Findings***

ES8. The evaluation identified the following as the country programme's greatest strengths:

- a) Programme well aligned with GoSL priorities, largely demand-driven, and generally in keeping with the 2008-2012 United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), but with room for improvement in relation to FAO's global goals of poverty and hunger reduction and the sustainable use of natural resources;
- b) Significant contribution to food production and asset replacement following civil conflict and natural disasters, frequently achieving project outputs and targets;

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<sup>1</sup> Excluding 19 very small Telefood projects valued in total at US\$200,000.

<sup>2</sup> All financial figures hereafter are expressed in United States dollars.

- c) Timely delivery of post-conflict recovery inputs in agriculture and fisheries by utilizing government mechanisms and by sharing facilities with other organizations; and
- d) Some successful initiatives aimed at strengthening GoSL's capacities for improved food and nutrition security and poverty reduction.

ES9. The evaluation team determined the following as programming areas in need of improvement:

- a) Draft Country Programme Framework (CPF) – weak on analysis and strategy and out of step with FAO guidelines in both content and process;
- b) Limited impact in relation to FAO's contribution to increased food and nutrition security and to poverty reduction in Sri Lanka;
- c) Limited policy influence;
- d) Questionable achievement of project outcomes, particularly those related to changes in the practice of beneficiaries at the community level and in government departments and agencies;
- e) Questionable sustainability of some project outcomes and insufficient attention to environmental issues;
- f) Weak performance as the cluster co-lead for agriculture and food security in Sri Lanka;
- g) Flawed designs of many country projects, particularly in relation to a lack of community/beneficiary participation, although significant improvements in recent projects;
- h) Weak integration of gender equality;
- i) Limited capacity development at institutional and organizational levels, owing in part to an over-reliance on short-term training and technical assistance; and
- j) Insufficient attention to the principles and codes of conduct for the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

ES10. With regard to management and administrative issues, the evaluation found the country programme strongest in the following areas:

- a) Highly successful local fund raising and good relationships with resource partners and UN organizations;
- b) Largely successful merging of emergency operations with FAO's regular programme; and
- c) Recent strengthening of monitoring and evaluation systems.

ES11. The evaluation team identified the following shortcomings in relation to management and administration:

- a) Uneven performance in managing human and financial resources with, for example, many staff on short-term contracts and use of inadequate procurement processes;
- b) Uneven backstopping from headquarters and RAP, particularly with respect to technical support (for example, no increase in support commensurate with FAO's reform programme and with FAO Sri Lanka's programming growth and its post-conflict transitioning);
- c) Tardiness on the part of HQ in providing the FAOR with systems support and staffing authority in line with decentralized responsibilities; and
- d) Inadequate systems for monitoring, evaluation and learning.

### **Lessons**

ES12. The evaluation team drew the following lessons – all pertinent to FAO’s past and future Sri Lanka country programme – from documents reviewed and from their own experience.

#### **Box 1: Lessons**

- Effective programming requires effective staff and good leadership.
- Vision and strategy are needed to set priorities, focus programming and capitalize on an organization’s comparative advantages.
- Reaching the most vulnerable requires special measures.
- Although difficult to achieve, emergency assistance needs to strike a balance between quality and quantity.
- Short time-frames and an over-reliance on training are usually insufficient for strengthening organizational capacity.
- Participatory engagement with beneficiaries, although challenging in some emergency situations, is important for sustainable results and targeted interventions.
- Integrating measures to strengthen resilience and reduce vulnerabilities is essential for food and nutrition security over the long term.
- Good reflective practice, which can help projects adapt to changes in the programming environment, takes time, resources and good communication.
- Attention to psychosocial disorders in post-conflict situations such as in Sri Lanka is essential for the health of individuals and organizations.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

ES13. FAO succeeded in raising more than \$75 million from a variety of resource partners, dramatically improving its visibility as a key player in Sri Lanka’s response to a succession of emergencies. FAO’s country office established a close working relationship with the GoSL and excellent relations within the United Nations Country Team. FAO’s regional projects brought new technical knowledge to Sri Lanka and exposed some decision makers to global and regional networks and best practices. Much of FAO’s technical assistance, particularly in agriculture and fisheries, brought timely, relevant information and expertise that helped resolve urgent problems and that aided Sri Lanka in a few cases to prepare for future shocks that could seriously undermine the country’s food and nutrition security and its agricultural economy. The evaluation team concludes that FAO’s country programme was, by and large, successful in its work over the period under review, and greatly appreciated by the GoSL.

ES14. However, the complex nature of FAO’s work, the challenging and unpredictable conditions in Sri Lanka and capacity gaps among FAO’s staff and its partners contributed to a number of shortcomings, not the least of which was the programme’s lack of a coherent framework with which to focus resources in areas aligned with FAO’s global comparative advantages and Sri Lanka’s status as an emerging middle-income country.

ES15. The evaluation team offers the following forward-looking recommendations to assist FAO to become even more effective in the future in adapting to Sri Lanka’s evolving country context, changing funding realities and emerging development trends. It is recommended that:

**Recommendation 1:** FAO's Sri Lanka country office consult more broadly with FAO staff and partners and develop a coherent, focused CPF that capitalizes on FAO's global and country-level comparative advantages, that is aligned with GoSL's emerging priorities, Sri Lanka's middle-income country status and the new UNDAF, and that advocates pro-poor and sustainable policies.

**Recommendation 2:** FAO HQ, RAP and FAO Sri Lanka work together to ensure that the country office has the right staff and consultants in place in order to implement the CPF, transition to new administrative management systems and compensate for increased operational responsibilities under decentralization.

**Recommendation 3:** FAO Sri Lanka continue to strengthen its monitoring and evaluation systems to meet both learning needs and accountability requirements, and that FAO create a position at RAP to better support country programmes in the region on matters pertaining to performance enhancement, monitoring and evaluation.

**Recommendation 4:** FAO Sri Lanka improve the design, implementation and sustainability of its country projects by continuing to expand its choice of partners, incorporating better participatory processes, analyzing and responding to gender-based differential needs, and drawing on FAO's rich repository of normative products and effective practices.



## **1 Introduction**

### ***1.1 FAO Country Evaluations***

1. The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has been carrying out evaluations of the entirety of its work in individual countries since 2005. This Sri Lanka country evaluation is the 11<sup>th</sup> evaluation of this type.

2. Country evaluations aim to improve the relevance and performance of FAO's interventions, providing accountability and deriving lessons for better formulation and implementation of country-level policies, strategies and activities in the future. Country evaluations look at FAO's work from the standpoint of its utility to the country and they provide FAO's stakeholders with a systematic and objective assessment of the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impacts and sustainability of the programmes and interventions undertaken by FAO.

3. Country evaluations often assist the formulation and review of Country Programme Frameworks (CPFs) and FAO's contributions to country programming under United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs). They consider how FAO interventions reflect the Organization's comparative advantages, its global strategic objectives and its core functions.

4. The main audiences for country evaluations are the FAO country office and the Member State. Other target groups include FAO headquarters (HQ), the FAO regional office and the Organization's resource partners.

### ***1.2 Structure of the Report***

5. The report is structured around the major issues of the evaluation, such as programming relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, rather than agricultural sub-sectors. This was done in order to avoid repetition and to capture what matters most to the primary users of the evaluation.

6. The report begins with a description of the purpose, scope and methodologies employed in the evaluation and a list of the key questions the evaluation is intended to answer. This section is followed by background information related to the programming and management context, Sri Lanka's macro-economic framework, its sector priorities and the UNDAF formulated during the programming period under review. The section ends with an overview of FAO's programming portfolio and the organizations that have supported it.

7. The section on the evaluation's findings is divided into two parts: the first deals with programming matters such as relevancy, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability, as well as cross-cutting programming issues such as project designs, partnerships, gender equality, capacity development and humanitarian codes of conduct; the second concerns management and administrative matters, monitoring, evaluation, mobilization and management of resources, decentralization, vision, strategy and support from FAO HQ and the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (RAP).

8. A section on lessons is followed by the evaluators' evidence-based conclusions and recommendations.

## **2 Evaluation Purpose, Scope and Methodology**

### **2.1 Purpose**

9. In 2011, the PC of FAO requested FAO's Office of Evaluation (OED) to conduct several evaluations of FAO's work in middle-income countries. The PC selected Sri Lanka based on that country's economic profile, FAO's relatively large country programme expenditure, and Sri Lanka's rapidly changing context.

10. As outlined in the terms of reference (TOR) in Annex 1, the rationale for the evaluation was twofold. First, the evaluation's findings, lessons and recommendations would be useful for FAO's future engagement in Sri Lanka and elsewhere as the country shifts from disaster recovery and civil conflict to peace and development. Second, the evaluation would provide a measure of accountability with respect to FAO's funding partners and the communities and vulnerable groups FAO has sought to assist in Sri Lanka.

### **2.2 Scope**

11. The evaluation covers almost all of FAO's work in Sri Lanka during the period 2006-2012, including eight global and regional projects, 62 country projects, FAO's normative work and other aspects of the Organization's core functions as applied in Sri Lanka. The country evaluation was focused on FAO's relief, recovery and development work following the end of the civil war through to the first half of 2012 because FAO had already completed independent evaluations of its response to the 2004 tsunami in the Indian Ocean and because the bulk of FAO's funding went to post-conflict recovery initiatives. In early 2012, FAO's OED completed an impact evaluation of FAO's support to the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) in Sri Lanka. The evaluation team incorporated the conclusions of that evaluation and the evaluations of FAO's post-tsunami relief work in the country evaluation.

12. The evaluation team examined the extent to which two cross-cutting issues—the integration of gender equality and respect for environmental sustainability—were reflected in FAO's work. It also assessed FAO's relief, recovery and development initiatives in relation to international best practices in capacity development and with respect to international standards to which FAO subscribes, such as those concerning humanitarian responses to disaster and conflict situations.

13. The evaluation also examined a number of management and operational issues, including FAO's leadership in Sri Lanka under its Representative and the country office's performance with respect to decentralization, the United Nations (UN) coordination and UNDAF processes, resource mobilization, and partnerships with the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) and others. The evaluation TOR also stipulated that the evaluation would assess the extent to which FAO headquarters and RAP added value to the programme in Sri Lanka, particularly in relation to technical support provided. Also included in the TOR was an assessment of the efficiency, effectiveness and appropriateness of the country office's management structures and administrative systems.



### **2.3 Key Questions**

14. The following key questions are based on the questions proposed in the evaluation's TOR. The evaluation team revised those questions following desk reviews and discussions with stakeholder groups at FAO HQ, RAP and in Sri Lanka. The key questions and the full range of sub-questions appear in Annex 2.

#### *Relevance*

- a) To what extent were FAO's interventions (and its new Country Programme Framework [CPF]) aligned with the Sri Lankan government's national development strategy (*Mahinda Chintana*), priorities and plans and with community needs and priorities?
- b) To what extent were FAO's interventions aligned with UN priorities for Sri Lanka?
- c) To what extent were FAO's interventions aligned with FAO's core functions and comparative advantages, such as its convening power, expert technical knowledge, and its normative role?
- d) To what extent were FAO's interventions targeted at disadvantaged and most vulnerable populations, including women?

#### *Effectiveness*

- a) How effective have FAO-supported activities been in achieving their intended results?
- b) How effective has FAO been in coordinating humanitarian responses with government and relief and aid agencies?
- c) How effective has FAO been in influencing the development and implementation of GoSL's policies in relation to sustainable rural development, food and nutrition security and environmental issues?
- d) How effective has FAO been with respect to convening key stakeholders—government, aid agencies, NGOs and private sector organizations—both nationally and regionally on issues related to food and nutrition security, agriculture, fisheries, environment and gender equality?

#### *Efficiency*

- a) To what extent has FAO conducted its operations and delivered its programmes in Sri Lanka in a timely and cost-effective way?
- b) How successful has FAO been in raising funds for its own interventions, and more generally for agriculture sector priorities in Sri Lanka?
- c) Did the FAO Representatives have the incentives, authority, resources (people and money) and time necessary to maximize FAO's performance?

#### *Sustainability*

- a) How sustainable have FAO's interventions been?
- b) To what degree has disaster risk reduction, including the concept of resilient livelihoods, been built into FAO's recovery and development programming and its new CPF?
- c) What was the extent of the Sri Lankan government's ownership of FAO's interventions, as evident through cash contributions, participation, follow-up and scaling up?
- d) What was the extent of beneficiary participation in, and ownership of, FAO's projects and programmes?

*Impact*

- a) What difference has FAO made through its work between 2006 and 2011?
- b) What have been the positive and negative unexpected or unintended impacts of FAO's work?

*Issues*

Programme and project designs

- a) To what extent did FAO have a coherent programme with well-defined links between relief, rehabilitation and development?
- b) To what extent were FAO's projects well designed?

Cross-cutting issues

- a) To what extent did FAO integrate gender equality and mainstream gender in its projects, programmes, staffing and management systems?
- b) To what extent did FAO respect sound environmental policies in its project, programmes and policy interventions?
- c) Why did some projects require heavy inputs of fertilizers? Did FAO take adequate measures to mitigate over-fishing?

Management and operations issues

- a) How has FAO's corporate reform agenda affected its performance in Sri Lanka?
- b) To what extent does FAO have effective systems in place for results-based monitoring, evaluation, learning and reporting?
- c) What progress has been made in rectifying some of the more serious weaknesses highlighted in the audit of the country office's financial and administrative systems?
- d) How effectively has FAO managed its partnerships for the delivery of its projects and programmes?

*Learning*

- a) What lessons can be drawn from the strengths and shortcomings of FAO's work in Sri Lanka from 2006 to 2012?

**2.4 Evaluation Team**

15. The evaluation team was composed of four international and four local experts, all with extensive experience. The team included sector specialists in crops, water systems and livestock, as well as individuals with advanced-level expertise in evaluation, community development, gender equality, institutional arrangements, post-conflict rehabilitation and capacity development. Two staff from FAO's OED in Rome participated on the evaluation team, one focused on fisheries and forestry and the other on nutrition, management and administrative issues.

16. Annex 3 provides more detailed information on the background, credentials and responsibilities of each team member.

## **2.5 Methodology**

17. The evaluation team took a forward-looking and improvement-oriented approach. It looked back over FAO's past six years of work in Sri Lanka with a view to determining lessons and effective practices that could be applied to FAO's future work in Sri Lanka and perhaps other countries with similar conditions. The consultative groups (CGs) in Rome and Colombo signaled a preference for this approach so as to obtain maximum benefit from the evaluation.

18. The evaluation's findings, lessons, conclusions and recommendations are based on evidence drawn from several lines of inquiry using multiple methods and tools. The evaluation team used triangulation to validate data gathered and to ensure that its assessment was systematic and as unbiased as reasonably possible. The team employed the following primary methodologies:

1. Desk reviews of FAO's Sri Lanka project documentation, including quantitative and qualitative monitoring and evaluation data, by each team member according to his/her area of specialization;
  2. A synthesis of previous evaluations of FAO's projects and programmes in Sri Lanka to identify common findings and areas of recommendation;
  3. A review of relevant evaluation reports, including the report of an independent impact evaluation of FAO's work in the fisheries sector in Sri Lanka;
  4. A review of key documents pertaining to the period under review, such as the Sri Lanka office's draft CPF, which the evaluators assessed using FAO's CPF quality assurance checklist;
  5. A review of Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) and Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) projects using a standard format and scoring methodology;
  6. Discussions with CG members in Rome (n=22) and in Colombo (n=26) to identify issues and to receive feedback on the preliminary findings and recommendations;
  7. Workshops with FAO staff in Colombo and Vavuniya to identify issues, lessons and future directions;
  8. Semi-structured individual and/or group interviews with a purposeful sample of FAO HQ staff (n=38), FAO staff at RAP (n=20) and FAO staff and consultants in Sri Lanka (n=41);
  9. Semi-structured individual and group interviews with a purposeful sample of national, provincial and district government representatives (n=103); representatives of UN organizations in Sri Lanka (n=28), NGOs (n=29), and private sector organizations (n=7) that played a role in FAO's relief and rehabilitation efforts; and
  10. Semi-structured interviews with a purposeful sample of about 200 community-level beneficiaries of FAO-supported projects, selected as described below.
19. The criteria for selecting the community beneficiaries were
- a) Residing in operational or recently completed project sites;
  - b) Logistical feasibility of visiting the site, given the time and resources available to the team;
  - c) Reasonable coverage of sectors and typologies of work undertaken by FAO, such as: assets replacement across crop, livestock, fisheries and land-related sectors; capacity development; and policy assistance; and
  - d) Mix of projects funded by different resource partners.

20. Based on these criteria, the evaluation team split into three sub-groups for their field visits to project sites in Jaffna, Mullaitivu, Killinochchi, Mannar, Vavuniya, Tricomalee, Batticaloa, Anuradhauara and Kandy, the districts where FAO was most active in recent years.

21. The evaluation team selected beneficiaries randomly in each district from the official beneficiary lists prepared by government. The team first selected communities with large numbers of beneficiaries so as to be able to see as many different interventions in the same geographic area as possible. They conducted interviews in local languages using independent interpreters where needed. The team interviewed representatives of vulnerable groups such as female- and elderly-headed households and the disabled. Women were interviewed separately where social and cultural barriers impeded frank discussion with men present.

22. In each of the aforementioned districts, the evaluators interviewed officials from government, UN agencies, and where applicable, NGOs. Those interviewed included heads of development societies, extension workers, *Samurdhi* officers,<sup>3</sup> and civil society representatives such as the spokespersons of fishers and farmers organizations.

23. The evaluators visited local markets to determine the price of agricultural and fishery commodities and met with private sector stakeholders to discuss market issues, the progress of agricultural recovery and the impact of agricultural assistance provided by FAO and others.

24. A list of all of the people with whom the evaluators met appears in Annex 4. A bibliography of the major documents reviewed for the evaluation appears in Annex 5.

25. This was an independent evaluation such that none of the team members had previous involvement with the programming included in the evaluation. Although independent, the evaluation allowed for considerable input from stakeholders at key phases. For example, the draft TOR for the evaluation was circulated for comment to CG members and FAO senior staff in Rome, Bangkok and Colombo. Upon completion of the evaluation mission, the evaluation team presented its preliminary findings and recommendations to the FAOR, CG, government officials, funding partners and senior FAO programme/project staff in Colombo. The team leader facilitated discussions at these sessions and incorporated all pertinent information into the evaluation report. The evaluation team provided a similar opportunity for input to the Assistant Director General and his staff at RAP.

26. OED disseminated a draft final report to the CGs and to FAO's senior management at HQ and RAP, requesting written comments and suggestions. The evaluation team prepared annexes assessing TCP and CERF projects, based on a scoring system provided by OED for this purpose. These appear as Annex 6 and Annex 7 respectively.

27. In assessing FAO's performance, the evaluation team took pains to accurately reflect the challenging programming context in the period under review. Not only was this period fraught with natural disasters and conflict, it was also a time when the agricultural economy in much of the north and east of Sri Lanka was in disarray.

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<sup>3</sup> *Samurdhi* officers are government officials who oversee GoSL's pro-poor programmes country wide.

## **2.6 Constraints**

28. Although there were no constraints that seriously impeded the evaluation, three issues posed challenges for the evaluation team.

29. First, the absence of a CPF for the period under review forced the evaluation team leader to construct a notional framework to guide the evaluation (see Annex 2 of the team leader's inception report submitted under separate cover for details).

30. Second, the desk review revealed limited data on project outcomes. Project reports usually contained information on activities, outputs and targets, but little in relation to changes in awareness, knowledge, attitudes, opinions and motivations (intermediate outcomes) and even less regarding changes in performance (longer-term outcomes). Few, if any, project reports provided evidence of higher-level changes (impact) related to FAO goals.

31. Third, the scope of the evaluation was broad, making it difficult to cover all key questions with equal depth. As a result, issues that the evaluation team deemed most significant received more treatment than others.

## **3 Background**

### **3.1 Sri Lanka's Agricultural, Fisheries and Forestry Sectors**

32. The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka has a population of over 21 million (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2011), consisting of predominantly Sinhalese (74 percent) and Tamil (18 percent) (United Kingdom, 2012).<sup>4</sup> Sinhalese, Tamil and English are the country's dominant languages.

33. About a third of the population lives in rural areas. Small farms are vital to the livelihoods of the majority of the rural population, particularly the poor. The agricultural sector employs just under one-third of the country's workforce but accounts for only 11.2 percent of the country's gross domestic product (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2011).

34. Sri Lanka has a tropical climate characterized by two major monsoon periods; the southwest monsoon from May to September, known as the *Yala* monsoon, and the northeast monsoon from December to February, known as the *Maha* monsoon (Department of Meteorology, 2012).

35. Sri Lanka has been a net food importer since it was a British colony prior to 1948. Since then, the country has been subject to the vicissitudes of global food markets. Efforts to break free of this dependency through increased production have been only partially successful. Changes in demographic structure, increased urbanization and shifts in food habits have led to increased consumption of food items that are largely imported. Successive governments since the late 1960s have attempted import substitution, but these were for the

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<sup>4</sup> Note that the figures for Sri Lanka's ethnic breakdown are approximate. Official data from the GoSL from the 2001 census exclude eight largely Tamil districts in the Northern and Eastern provinces.

most part abandoned in 1977 in favour of market-oriented policies and export-oriented trade. The GoSL continues, however, to subsidize fertilizers, provide agricultural credit through commercial banks, fix minimum buy-back prices for selected food crops and subsidize land diversification.

36. Seventy-six percent of Sri Lanka's agricultural land is managed by about 1.8 million farmers, each of whom has 0.83 hectares (ha) of holdings on average. About 70 percent of these small farms are solely devoted to crop production, the remaining have a mixture of crops and livestock and in a few cases solely livestock. A further four percent of agricultural land is managed by 1.5 million farmers whose tiny land holdings have an average size of just 600 m<sup>2</sup> or 0.06 ha (Chandrasiri, Aheeyar, Hathurusinghe and Samarathunga, 2010). The plantation sub-sector, which produces much of Sri Lanka's tea, rubber and coconut for markets, forms a significant component of the agriculture sector and is characterized by large landholdings which together total about 800,000 ha.

37. Agriculture's relative contribution to Sri Lanka's gross domestic product (GDP) has fallen in recent years from 17 percent (2005) to about 12 percent (2011), owing to relatively higher growth rates in other sectors, particularly the industrial, construction and service sectors (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2011). The livestock sub-sector contributes about one percent of national GDP (GoSL, 2012). This figure does not capture local or informal trade that tends to dominate subsistence and small farm agriculture. For most small and poor farmers in Sri Lanka, livestock provide a vital source of supplementary income as well as acting as insurance against crop failures.

38. Demand for livestock products in Sri Lanka is dominated by milk consumption. Average consumption is 36 kg/capita/year. This amount is relatively low compared to India (48 kg/capita/year) and the United States of America (USA) (118 kg/capita/year) but will increase in coming years, according to data trends (Speedy 2003). Sri Lankans have one of the lowest meat consumption rates in the world. Like India, this low rate is explained primarily by cultural rather than by economic reasons. Poultry meat and eggs are the most common forms of non-dairy animal protein consumed.

39. The GoSL considers the domestic dairy sector to be the most important of all livestock sub-sectors because of the rural employment it can generate and its potential to replace the large volume of imported dairy products. Domestic milk production supplies around 20 percent of demand; imports account for the rest (GoSL 2012). Most dairy farms have, on average, between two and five cows. Most dairy farms are located within the medium- to higher-rainfall agro-ecological regions.

40. About 70 percent of the GDP contribution from the livestock sub-sector comes from the poultry industry. Chicken meat and egg production has grown rapidly over the past three decades and is usually capable of supplying local demand for poultry meat and eggs. A few large companies dominate commercial production. The broiler industry uses contract grower systems with small farmers. Rural backyard poultry production remains a vital source of protein and income for the poor and for women in particular. With regard to livestock, the role of the state is mostly confined to epizootic disease control and developing policy and regulations.

41. Food crops, which include rice, maize, pulses, millets, edible oil crops, vegetables and fruits, account for more than a third of agriculture's contribution to Sri Lanka's GDP.

Rice is the staple food for most Sri Lankans, but the country imports substantial quantities of wheat flour for human consumption. Sri Lanka exports about 25 varieties of fruits and 40 varieties of vegetables, mainly to the Maldives and the Middle East. Other major export commodities include rubber, tea, cocoa and spices such as pepper, cinnamon, cloves, and cardamom.

42. The GoSL has divided the agriculture sector among 11 ministries of which the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) plays a major role. A special supra-ministerial institution, the Presidential Task Force (PTF), oversees all aspects of northern recovery following the end of conflict in 2009. The plethora of government entities concerned with agriculture and the devolution of responsibilities within government create coordination challenges for both government and its partner agencies such as FAO.

43. In 2010, Sri Lanka's fisheries sector, including the aquaculture sub-sector, contributed 1.2 percent of GDP and employed roughly 650,000 women and men (GoSL, 2010). Most production and employment has been in the marine capture sub-sector. Capture production in 2009 was 310,000 tonnes (FAO, 2011a). Coastal fishing is the primary source of livelihood for small-scale fishers, who constitute about 80 percent of all fishers and who represent the dominant share of the overall catch (GoSL, 2010). The full nutrition and livelihoods potential of small-scale fisheries has yet to be reached, owing mainly to marketing problems and limited consumer awareness.

44. In recent years, the GoSL has emphasized fish exports as part of its ten-year development strategy (*Mahindra Chintana*). Exports of marine products such as tuna and shrimp have grown rapidly and the sub-sector is now one of the fastest-growing in the country. In 2009, exports of fish and fishery products were valued at \$181 million (FAO, 2011a).

45. Managing the fisheries sector in a sustainable way remains a challenge for the GoSL. FAO and other international organizations long ago cautioned the GoSL about over-fishing and stock depletion in coastal waters. Although the government acknowledged the problem, stock depletion is likely to increase as non-traditional donors such as China help finance industrial fishing fleets that have little regard for environmental safeguards. With increased commercial fishing, the GoSL is challenged to stop illegal, unsustainable and unreported fishing, which usually involves large volumes of accidental by-catch. Fishing rights and ocean ecosystem management have become increasingly important for Sri Lanka. The country has come into conflict with India and other countries fishing in the Gulf of Mannar.

46. Sri Lanka has a relatively small but growing aquaculture sector. Aquaculture produced 7,500 tonnes of fish in 2009 (FAO, 2011a). Freshwater aquaculture, an important source of nutrition and livelihood for many low-income households, accounted for a little over half of total production; the other half coming from marine shrimp farming that has degraded some coastal areas.

47. Similar to agriculture, the management of Sri Lanka's fisheries is divided among several departments and agencies. The fisheries sector in Sri Lanka is primarily the responsibility of the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development (MFARD). The Ministry does most of the policy and planning pertaining to the aquatic sector. Under MFARD, the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DFAR) is responsible for the

management, regulation, conservation and development of fisheries and aquatic resources while the National Aquaculture Development Authority (NAQDA) is concerned with the development and management of freshwater aquatic resources and all forms of aquaculture.

48. Most fisheries research is carried out by the National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA), which is also responsible for knowledge dissemination and advisory services. Three state-owned companies have important roles: the Ceylon Fisheries Corporation buys, distributes and sells fish and fish products; Ceylon Fisheries Harbours Corporation builds and maintains harbours and related infrastructure; and the CEYNOR Foundation Ltd. builds, manufactures and repairs boats and produces fishing gear.

49. At 0.6 percent of GDP in 2011, the forestry sector's contribution to Sri Lanka's national economy is relatively small (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2011). Tropical rain forests are found in the country's wet zone, submontane forests in the central highlands, and dry monsoon forest in the country's dry zone. Little of Sri Lanka's original forest cover remains. Estimates of the country's forest coverage vary between 20 and 30 percent of the land area. Home gardens account for 42 percent of the country's wood production (FAO South Asia Forest Outlook, 2011). Forest conservation and biodiversity protection are major concerns of the GoSL.

50. According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), population growth has put pressure on Sri Lanka's land and forests with the current rate of forest loss estimated at 1.5 percent a year (Moore, Greiber & Baig, 2010). Although population growth has slowed in recent years, rural poverty and landlessness have contributed to high levels of forest encroachment and conversion, despite Sri Lanka's national commitment to conservation and biodiversity protection.

51. Sri Lanka's forestry sector faces numerous challenges, among them a weak policy and legal framework for devolving authority to communities. Much of Sri Lanka's forest lands remain under state ownership, and responsibility and authority for managing forest resources are spread among several government agencies such as the Forestry Department, Department of Forest Conservation and the State Timber Corporation, all of which fall under the authority of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources. Multiple, often conflicting, interests contribute to institutional overlap and inefficiency (Moore *et al*, 2010). Many laws regulating the use of forests and other natural resources in Sri Lanka are outdated, some contradictory and overlapping. Weak enforcement and ineffective deterrents also pose challenges for the sustainable management of Sri Lanka's forestry sector. The country's emphasis on forest protection rather than forest management has led to high policing costs, inefficiency, increased opportunities for corruption and disincentives for private tree growers (Moore *et al*, 2010).

### **3.2 Socio-economic Overview and Sector Priorities**

52. Although Sri Lanka's economy faltered in the years leading up to the end of the civil war in 2009, it has begun to recover and in 2012 Sri Lanka gained the status of a middle-income country. The country's growth rate was just over eight percent in 2011 and is forecast at 7.2 percent in 2012, according to Sri Lanka's Central Bank (*The Sunday Times*, March 18, 2012). When the Northern and Eastern provinces are excluded, unemployment among the country's workforce is relatively low at about 5 percent per annum with women experiencing



a higher rate of unemployment than men, discrimination in the workplace and a gender wage gap (GoSL, 2011; Gunewardena, 2002).

53. Poverty rates have also fallen, from 15 percent of the population in 2006-2007 to nine percent in 2009-2010 (World Bank, 2012). Poverty rates in Colombo District are under four percent, although pockets of poverty persist in all other parts of the country, particularly in the predominantly Tamil districts of the north and east where there are many female-headed households. Almost 90 per cent of the poor live in the rural areas (International Fund for Agricultural Development, 2012).

54. Sri Lanka is on track to meet most of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) says Sri Lanka is an early achiever on 10 of the 21 indicators, including those related to the goals of universal primary education and gender equality. Sri Lanka is also expected to meet the goals for maternal health and HIV/AIDs. However, Sri Lanka is making slower progress on goals related to malnutrition and child mortality (World Bank, 2012), particularly in conflict-affected areas of the north and east.

55. With 8.9 percent of the population living below the poverty line, near-universal literacy, national income per capita at \$2,836<sup>5</sup> in 2011, according to Sri Lanka's Department of Census and Statistics (The Sunday Leader, June 16, 2012), Sri Lanka is a model for the region and the developing world. With exports at about 22 percent of GDP in 2010, the country's economic growth is expected to continue (World Bank, 2012) into the foreseeable future.

56. However, these gains mask significant geographic and gender disparities. While poverty has declined at the national level, income disparity between geographic areas and among classes and between genders has increased. The GoSL has committed itself to additional investment in what it refers to as "lagging regions," in particular the Northern and Eastern provinces. Socio-economic data and data on gender gaps in these areas are scarce but known to be less favourable than national averages. Studies undertaken by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP) in 2010, for example, found significantly higher levels of poverty and chronic and acute food insecurity in many districts of the Northern and Eastern provinces compared to national averages. A 2011 study noted "precarious insecurity" among women in the north and east as well as "alarming incidents of gender-based violence" (International Crisis Group, 2011, p. i) While it is hoped that the country will be able to transition to stability and development, progress in the disaster and conflict-affected regions is likely to be gradual, according to the World Bank (2012). Also, Sri Lanka remains at risk of natural disasters and food insecurity. The government is committed to disaster risk reduction and the MoA features prominently in the GoSL's disaster risk reduction strategy.

57. In 2006, the GoSL issued a ten-year development strategy, the *Mahinda Chintana*, which includes the goal of achieving more equitable development through accelerated rural advancement. The 2010-2011 floods in the eastern and central areas reduced paddy production and increased the negative impacts of rising world food prices on the country. Sri Lanka's aim has been to increase domestic rice production and lessen dependence on food

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<sup>5</sup> All dollar amounts are in United States dollars unless otherwise stated.

imports, which it hopes to achieve in part through the resettlement of conflict-displaced populations and the resumption of agricultural production. The GoSL’s development plans seek to improve the links in the agricultural sector between farmers and markets.

58. In the fisheries sector, the government’s goals have been to increase the production, marketing and domestic consumption of fish, raise the livelihoods of fishing communities and implement environmental management of fishery resources – aims that are important for poverty reduction and export-led growth.

59. The GoSL agricultural sub-sector and forestry priorities are outlined in Table 1.

**Table 1: GoSL Agricultural and Forestry Sub-sector Priorities**

<b>Sub-sector</b>	<b>Priorities</b>
Food crops	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Achieve food security of people</li> <li>2. Ensure higher and sustainable income for farmers</li> <li>3. Ensure remunerative price for agricultural produce</li> <li>4. Uninterrupted access to competitive markets both in Sri Lanka and abroad</li> <li>5. Farm mechanization</li> <li>6. Expand the extent under cultivation</li> <li>7. Reduce wastage in transit</li> <li>8. Ensure environmental conservation</li> <li>9. Ensure efficient farm management techniques<sup>6</sup></li> <li>10. Use of high yielding seeds and efficient water management</li> </ol>
Livestock	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase the supply of domestic livestock produce at competitive prices</li> <li>2. Achieve increased self-reliance in domestic milk production</li> <li>3. Increase the current domestic production of poultry products</li> <li>4. Achieve sustainable and equitable benefits to livestock farmers</li> <li>5. Domestic livestock products to be competitive with imported products</li> </ol>
Fisheries	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improve the nutritional status and food security of the people by increasing the national fish production</li> <li>2. Minimize post-harvest losses and improve quality and safety of fish products to acceptable standards</li> <li>3. Increase employment opportunities in fisheries and related industries and improve the socio economic status of the fisher community</li> <li>4. Increase foreign exchange earnings from fish products</li> <li>5. Conserve the coastal and aquatic environment</li> </ol>
Forestry conservation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Conserve forests with regard to biodiversity, soils, water, historical, cultural, religious, and aesthetic values</li> <li>2. Increase tree cover and productivity for present and future forest products and services</li> <li>3. Enhance contribution to welfare of rural population and national economy</li> </ol>

Source: Draft FAO Country Programme Framework, Annex 1, May 2012.

<sup>6</sup> The evaluation team’s crop specialist believes that improving productivity per land area is also a priority of the GoSL.

### **3.3 UN Country Team and Development Assistance Framework**

60. The UN Country Team (UNCT) of which FAO was a member,<sup>7</sup> and the GoSL jointly developed the 2008-2012 UNDAF in consultation with resource partners and civil society organizations (CSOs) within the context of the 2005 World Summit, the Millennium Declaration (MD) and the MDGs, and other internationally agreed treaty obligations and development goals, and in the spirit of the UN reform aimed at harmonizing the contribution of individual UN agencies in the common interest of the people of Sri Lanka. By the time the UNDAF was completed, the ceasefire agreement and peace process between the GoSL and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam had begun to falter with rising levels of violence and human rights violations.

61. The results matrix of the 2008-2012 UNDAF featured four main themes as reflected in the following outcomes:

1. Economic growth and social services are pro-poor, equitable, inclusive and sustainable in fulfilment of the MDGs and MDG plus, and focus in particular on the rural areas;
2. Governance mechanisms and practices enable the realization of the principles of MD and promote and protect human rights of all persons;
3. An improved environment for a sustainable peace anchored in social justice and reconciliation;
4. Women are further empowered to contribute and benefit equitably and equally in political, economic and social life (UN, 2007, p. iii-iv).

62. FAO chaired the UNDAF poverty pillar, beginning in 2009. Crossing-cutting themes in the UNDAF included the protection of human rights, environment, disaster risk management, HIV/AIDS, and equity for and inclusion of vulnerable groups. The 2008-2012 UNDAF committed UNCT members to: implement joint programmes wherever possible; focus on the most economically backward districts of Sri Lanka; tackle gender equality issues such as gender-based violence and women's lack of access to decision making and resources; and strengthen institutional capacity of the GoSL toward "increased transparency in public decision making and policy implementation, efficient delivery of public services and improved citizen participation on matters that affect people's lives" (UN, 2007, p. 8).

63. The UNCT began formulating its 2013-2017 UNDAF in March 2011 with an inter-agency taskforce to guide the process. The preparation process involved a desk review of the country context, wide-ranging discussions with government to determine priority needs and proposed areas of UN cooperation and consultations with policy think tanks, academia, the private sector, IFIs, non-governmental organisations, bilateral and other development partners.

64. In July 2011, the UN and the GoSL reached consensus on four broad areas of UN assistance consistent with the government's development priorities as outlined in its *Mahinda*

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<sup>7</sup> The UNCT was composed of FAO, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), International Labour Organization (ILO), IOM, UNDP, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), UNICEF, United Nations Office of Project Services (UNOPS), WFP, WB and the World Health Organization (WHO), with support from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Asian Development Bank (AsDB).

*Chintana*, the MD and the framework of the MDGs. The draft UNDAF identified several challenges. First was the need to deal with persistent inequalities, in particular, the plight of vulnerable groups, including those working in the plantation sector, the rural poor, female-headed households, the elderly and people living with disabilities. Second was the need to assist vulnerable groups in economically depressed areas of the country, particularly people returning to the conflict-affected areas. Third, was the need to contend with environmental threats stemming from economic growth. Fourth, the UNDAF underscored the need to promote women's empowerment, gender equality and human rights while guaranteeing social protection to all.

65. The 2013-2017 UNDAF's overall goal is "sustainable and inclusive economic growth with equitable access to quality social services, strengthened human capabilities and reconciliation for lasting peace" (UN, 2012, p. 5). The four pillars envisioned to achieve this goal are as follows:

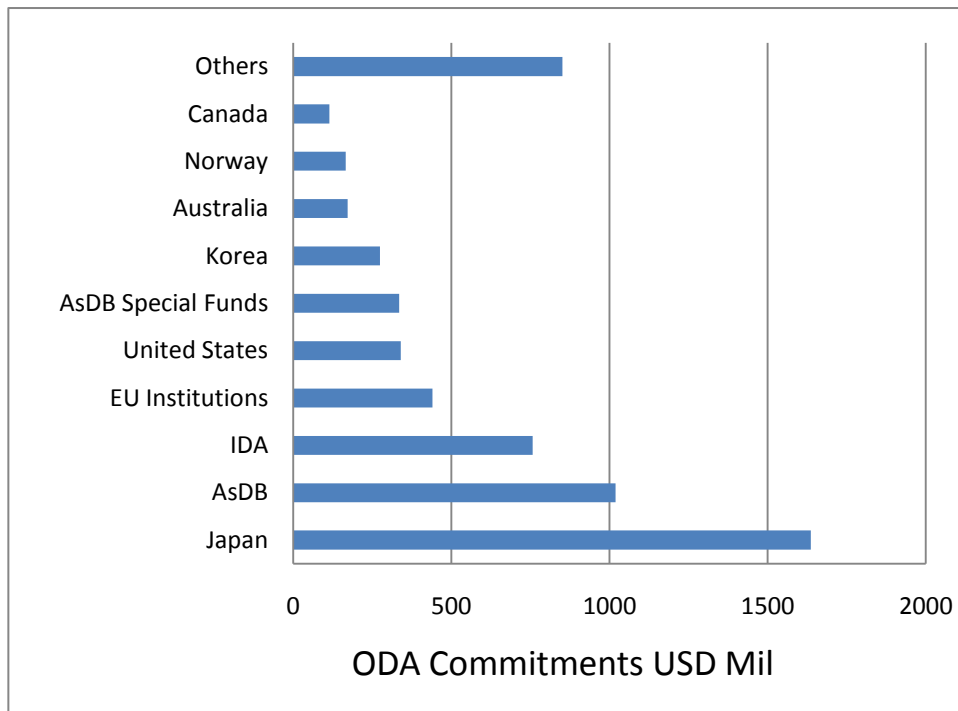
- a) Equitable economic growth and sustainable livelihoods with "an enabled environment for equal opportunities to sustainable livelihoods, decent work and employability" as the expected outcome (p. 5);
- b) Disparity reduction, equitable and quality social services with "strengthened provision of, access to and demand for equitable and quality social services delivery and enhanced capacity of national institutions for evidence-based policy development" as the desired outcome (p.5-6);
- c) Governance, human rights, gender equality, social inclusion and protection with "communities empowered and institutions strengthened to support local governance, access to justice, social integration, gender equality, and monitoring, promotion and protection of human rights in alignment with international treaties and obligations and in alignment to the constitution of Sri Lanka" as the expected outcome; and
- d) Environmental Sustainability, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction with "Policies, programmes and capacities to ensure environmental sustainability, address climate change mitigation and adaptation and reduce disaster risks, in place at national, sub-national and community levels" as the expected outcome (p. 6).

66. The 2013-2017 UNDAF signalled to the GoSL that its partnership with the UN would "increasingly be at the upstream policy level," although it would "continue to draw on its extensive experience working with communities and its trusted partnerships at the national and sub-national level to support residual service delivery needs in lagging areas and empowerment of vulnerable groups" (p. 6). The UNDAF called for "harmonized programming and collective targeting" among UN agencies so as to avoid duplication, maximize impact and avoid spreading UNCT members too thinly (p. 6).

### **3.4 Resource Partners**

67. Sri Lanka's resource partners are varied with countries such as Japan, China, Iran, Korea and India showing increased interest in foreign direct investment (GoSL, 2010). As shown in Figure 1, in addition to Japan, the WB and AsDB have provided the most funding to Sri Lanka, usually in the form of loans and grants and largely for infrastructure development, water and sanitation and relief and reconstruction efforts. Only two percent of all resource partners' funding has been devoted to the agriculture sector.

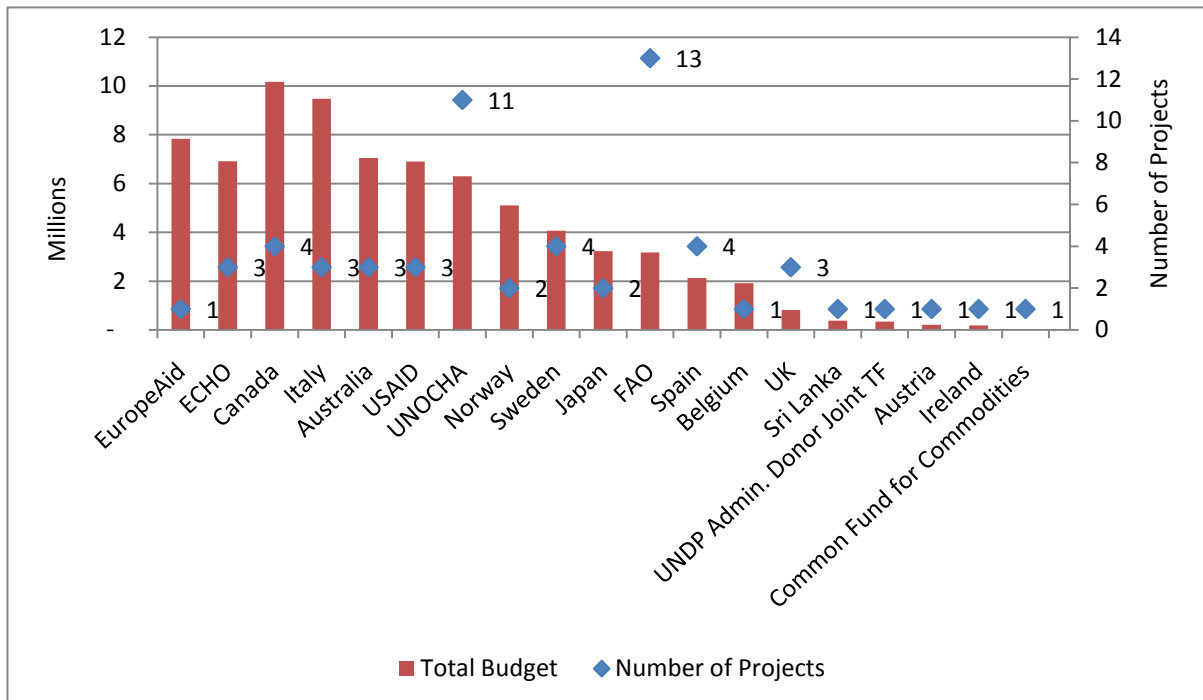
Figure 1. Total Overseas Development Assistance to Sri Lanka, 2006-2010



Source: FAO/ADAM Aug 2012 - <http://www.fao.org/tc/adam/data/index.html>

68. FAO itself has received funding from diverse partners for its work in Sri Lanka during the period under review. As shown in Figure 2, much of the funding supported small, short-term projects, most of them related to relief and rehabilitation initiatives.

Figure 2. Total Contributions to FAO and Number of Projects by Resource Partner, 2006–2011



Source: FAO, FPMIS November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2011

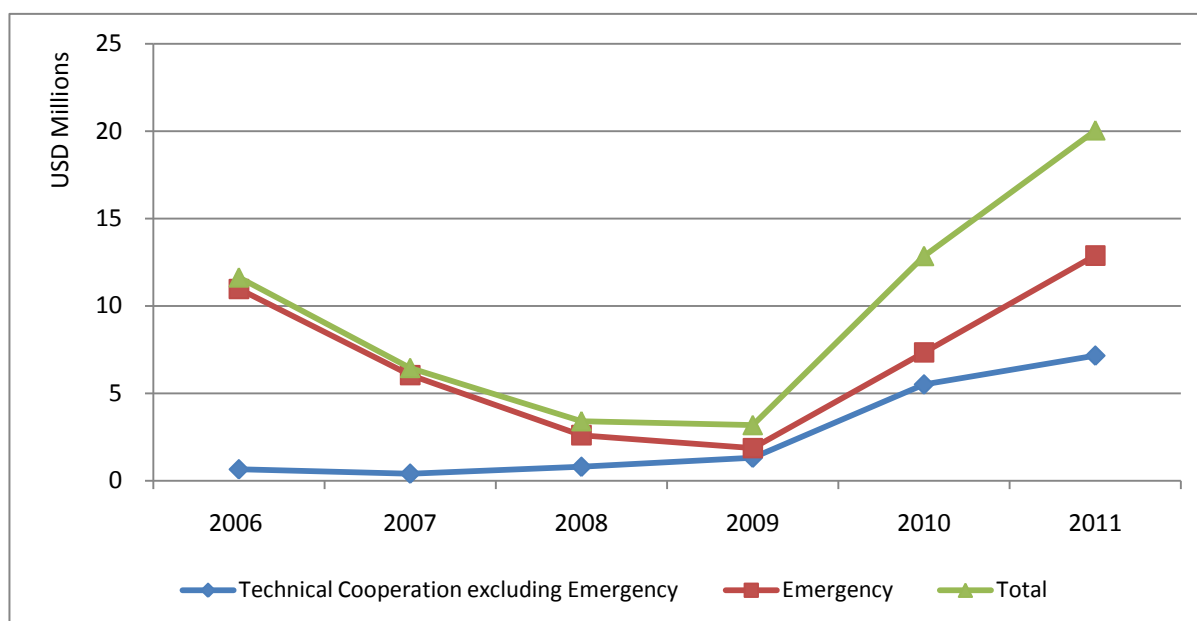
### 3.5 FAO's Programming Portfolio

69. During the period 2006-2011, FAO implemented 81 country-dedicated projects amounting to \$76.4 million. Of the 81 projects, 19 were small TeleFood Projects, which are not included in the evaluation. The remaining 62 projects have a combined budget of \$76.22 million.

70. More than 95 percent of financing for these projects came via trust funds from resource partners, with the balance from FAO's regular programme budget, which covers the operating costs of the FAO Representation in Sri Lanka and the cost of projects under the TCP.<sup>8</sup> TCP funding for Sri Lanka has totalled about \$3.8 million over the past six years. About 85 percent of all expenditures have come under the authority of FAO's TCE at HQ, with the balance coming under the FAOR for Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka funded only one FAO project, (UTF /SRL/058/SRL), and the source of that funding was IFAD. Coordination among GoSL's resource partners has tended to be largely on a bilateral basis with few common fora to discuss GoSL policies and priorities and to coordinate assistance.

71. Figure 3 shows that the overall budget for the FAO programme in Sri Lanka was relatively large in 2006 following the tsunami and then rapidly diminished until 2009 when the civil war ended and displaced persons began returning to their homes. The budget continued to climb when floods in late 2010 and early 2011 resulted in additional relief efforts.

**Figure 3. Field Programme Expenditures in Sri Lanka for Technical Cooperation and Emergency Delivery, 2006-2011**



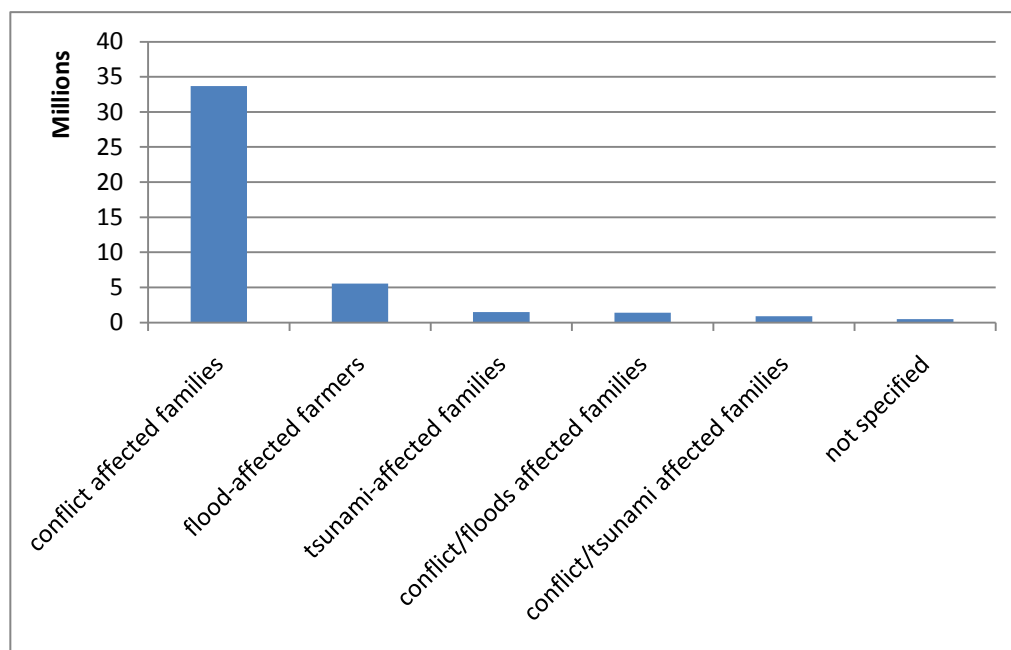
Source: FAO, FPMIS, 2011.

72. FAO's field projects over the past six years have focused predominantly on providing agricultural assistance to conflict- and flood-affected households. Some projects

<sup>8</sup> The TCP is financed from the assessed contributions of FAO Member States and aims to provide technical expertise through targeted, short-term projects. FAO Member States are responsible for submitting formal requests for TCP support; the FAO Regional Representative has the authority to approve them.

have also involved establishing farmer-to-market links, training and extension services, livestock management and land and irrigation rehabilitation. A significant number of projects helped rehabilitate the fisheries sector and the communities dependent on it after the tsunami. Coordination of the agriculture sector humanitarian response was an important aspect of FAO's work. Non-emergency related work included support on hybrid rice production, biotechnologies and coastal resources assessment. FAO gave minor attention to forestry during the period under review and only of late has it embarked on significant initiatives in this sector that could help to improve forest inventory and classification, determine the drivers of deforestation and update the country's forest management strategy.

**Figure 4. Total Budget (USD) of FAO projects providing inputs by type of beneficiaries<sup>9</sup>**



Source: OED portfolio analysis, FAO Projects 2006-2012.

73. The GoSL has been FAO's primary implementing partner for the vast majority of its projects. FAO has, however, partnered with some civil society organizations (CSOs) in the delivery of some emergency and recovery assistance to households affected by conflict and natural disasters, particularly in the east and central parts of the country.

74. FAO has provided support for national planning and development, including the preparation of a National Programme for Food Security (NPFs), and promoted regional collaboration in the areas of fisheries and aquaculture, including livelihoods and safety at sea (partly under the CCRF framework), biotechnology, hybrid crops and genetic resources use, disaster and population needs assessment, and avian influenza control. Much of this support has been provided through TCPs. Other uses of TCP funding have included technical support for:

- Aquatic Weeds Management;
- Formulation of the National Project on Minimum Standards for Fish Handling and reduced post-harvest losses in selected tsunami-affected communities in Sri Lanka;

<sup>9</sup> The figure includes only input distribution projects

- Planning and implementation of strategies for components of GoSL's Ten Year Development Policy Framework of the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Sector Plan;
- Preparation of inland fisheries sector development programme and implementation strategy;
- Strengthening national capacity for hybrid rice development and use for food security and poverty alleviation;
- National seminar on value addition of fruits and vegetables;
- Capacity building in market-oriented advisory services for extension workers;
- Collaborative work on management of Weligama Coconut Leaf Wilt Disease;
- Restructuring of National Institute of Plantation Management;
- Strengthening the agricultural extension system through agro-enterprise development;
- Dairy cattle and buffalo improvement;
- Training disabled persons in rural Sri Lanka for sustainable livelihoods;
- Formulation of a National Agricultural Biotechnology Research and Development Programme and Investment Plan; and
- Training on tools and methods for Sri Lanka's planned Agricultural Census in 2012.

75. With respect to partnership, alliances and advocacy, the FAOR has been engaged in dialogue with government and donors with respect to emergency coordination, fundraising, and national strategic planning.

### **3.6 FAO Representation**

76. FAO has full-fledged Representation in Sri Lanka that falls under the overall responsibility of RAP in Bangkok. The incumbent FAOR has been in the position since mid-2008 and he is also responsible for the Maldives. The FAOR is supported by a relatively small permanent staff of about eight, all of whom are based in Colombo. The country office in Sri Lanka had a relatively large field staff, numbering over 100, in the post-tsunami period, all funded through projects. The Recovery Coordination Unit, based in FAO's Sri Lanka office, manages emergency recovery interventions. The physical premises of the Representation are within a common UN compound.

77. The country programme in theory receives the majority of its administrative and technical support from RAP. However, in practice, the TCE and technical units at HQ provide significant support, particularly with respect to the emergency and recovery programme.

78. FAO Sri Lanka has no overarching strategic frameworks, although the FAO office in Sri Lanka prepared a well-formulated *Recovery and Rehabilitation Programme for the Northern Region* (FAO, 2009). FAO Sri-Lanka had been preparing its first CPF over the year preceding the country evaluation.

79. The previous sections have provided an overview of the sectors, FAO's programme portfolio and the institutional arrangements during the period under review, noting some issues and constraints FAO faced. Next, the evaluation team turns to other aspects of the programming environment that posed significant challenges for FAO's work during the period under review.



### **3.7 A Challenging Programme Environment**

80. The evaluation team was struck by the dynamic nature and complexity of the FAO's programming environment during the period 2006 to 2012. Throughout much of this time, the Northern and Eastern provinces were embroiled in civil conflict, making it difficult to mount and sustain a development programme. A series of natural disasters wracked parts of the country, which meant that FAO had to turn much of its attention to short-term emergency assistance. For example, parts of the country experienced continuous rains between late December 2010 and February 2011, causing more than 90,000 farming households in the Eastern Province to lose their paddy crop, the main source of livelihood for many.

81. As Figure 3 suggested, FAO's activities in Sri Lanka shot up dramatically in 2009-2010 when the GoSL suddenly began releasing some of the estimated 300,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) from detention camps. This put great demands on the Organization, requiring it to mobilize resources quickly for relief and rehabilitation programmes on a large scale. Many aspects of this work proved challenging. Government maintained tight control of planning, decision making and implementation of relief and rehabilitation efforts in the Northern Province and much of the east. FAO was under pressure to respond quickly with little time for consultation and planning. Government line departments – most with weak capacity – were FAO's main implementing partners. Initially, the GoSL disallowed NGOs from operating relief efforts in the Northern Province and restricted access to beneficiaries in zones it deemed high security. In a highly politically-charged programming environment, FAO found itself obliged to deliver basic agricultural inputs to large numbers of returnees spread out over vast areas and with little opportunity to follow up once agricultural inputs had been dispersed. Most resource partners called for short-term, output-oriented projects rather than long-term development initiatives.

82. For much of the period under review, FAO's staff in Sri Lanka were unable to plan and carry out projects in the logical, linear manner consistent with results-based management (RBM) practice.<sup>10</sup> The office in Colombo, which was undergoing restructuring to combine the emergency programme with FAO's regular programming, was in a crisis mode for much of that time, requiring continuous change and adaptation, according to many of FAO's country staff who the evaluators interviewed. The government's policies, programmes and senior personnel were in constant flux, as were many of the GoSL's priorities.<sup>11</sup> When reviewing project proposals, the GoSL restricted FAO's use of international consultants and once blocked an attempt by the FAOR to employ an international staff member for a second term.

83. Not only were the war victims facing psycho-social trauma, but other stakeholders were as well. Organizations, like FAO, with a mix of Sinhalese and Tamil staff were involved with their own healing and reconciliation following years of bitter civil war and ethnic strife that permeated much of Sri Lankan society.

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<sup>10</sup> The evaluation team notes that a growing body of literature has begun to challenge the utility of RBM in such circumstances. See, for example: European Centre for Development Policy Management. *Policy Management Brief, No. 21, December 2008.*

<sup>11</sup> For example, staff said they dealt with five different Ministers of Agriculture during the period under review.

84. The evaluation team underscores these challenges not to excuse FAO's shortcomings, but rather to acknowledge the complex nature of its work environment and the challenges it presented to the FAO country team.

## **4 Findings**

### **4.1 Programming Relevance**

85. The evaluation team finds FAO's programming well aligned with GoSL priorities, largely demand-driven, and generally in keeping with the 2008-2012 UNDAF, but with room to improve alignment with FAO's global goals for poverty and hunger reduction and the sustainable use of natural resources.

#### **4.1.1 Strengths**

86. FAO's emergency and recovery interventions throughout the period under review were well aligned to GoSL's plans and priorities. FAO's response to the 2004 tsunami, its post-conflict resettlement programming beginning in 2009, its response to soaring food prices in 2009, and its post-flood relief and recovery work commencing in 2011 were driven by the GoSL and were important components of multi-sector UN country responses, according to most stakeholders interviewed and documents reviewed for the evaluation.

87. For example, the evaluation team found all of FAO's livestock sector initiatives relevant. FAO's technical support related to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) built upon the Department of Animal Production and Health's (DAPH) Sri Lanka Exotic Disease Emergency Plan. Using technical staff and consultants recruited through RAP and HQ, FAO strengthened the Sri Lankan veterinary authority's capacity to detect and control any outbreak of HPAI. This support came at a time when this disease was spreading across Asia and Africa and threatened Sri Lanka's commercial poultry sector. Sri Lanka is still free of HPAI, giving the country trade advantages should the poultry industry become competitive enough to export meat and eggs.

88. FAO's support for the rehabilitation of water tanks was a critical component of the GoSL's efforts in order to resuscitate agricultural production in conflict-affected areas of the country at the end of the civil war. Since availability of water was among the most constraining factors for agriculture in much of Sri Lanka's dry zone, the rehabilitation of small tanks as the time-tested source of agricultural water was highly relevant.

89. FAO's interventions in the fisheries and aquaculture sub-sector were closely aligned to the objectives of the policy thrusts outlined in the GoSL's *Mahinda Chintana*, including the promotion of offshore and deep-sea fishing, the reduction of post-harvest losses, the development of inland fisheries and aquaculture and the expansion of foreign and local markets.

90. FAO's crop production initiatives, many of which featured extensive land preparation, were closely aligned with GoSL recovery objectives for the north and east and highly relevant to the needs of beneficiaries according to interviews conducted there by members of the evaluation team.

91. Not only were FAO's recovery projects relevant, so too were its TCPs for the most part. For example, FAO's partnership with DAPH to improve dairy productivity by selecting local dairy cattle with the highest genetic potential and breeding from them (TCP/SRL/3204) was particularly appropriate to the needs of small-scale milk producers. The TCP also included a relevant research and training component on improved nutrition and fertility management for higher yielding dairy cattle. The GoSL is now financing the continuation of the initiative and plans to expand it over the next five years to other parts of the country.

92. FAO's technical expertise for the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (UN-REDD) was relevant to UN objectives and GoSL interests, given the potential for climate change to undermine agricultural production in Sri Lanka and increase urban-rural inequities, according to recent studies (Eriyagama, Smakhtin, Chandrapala and Fernando, 2010).

93. Some of FAO's regional and global programmes were relevant to Sri Lanka's interests and priorities. For example, the Regional Fisheries Livelihoods Programme sought to establish the co-management of lagoon resources and the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem Programme aimed to resolve transboundary marine ecosystem disputes, both highly relevant to Sri Lanka's economic interests according to project documents and interviews with GoSL officials.

#### *4.1.2 Areas in need of improvement*

94. Although the evaluation team found FAO's programming relevant overall, it also found room for improvement, particularly in relation to the Organization's global goals of food security, poverty reduction and the sustainable utilization of natural resources. The fisheries sector is a case in point. Prior to 2006, FAO and other organizations were well aware of over-fishing in coastal waters (Samaranayake, 2003; Silvestre, Garces, Stobutzki, Ahmed, Santos, Luna & Zhou, 2003; and Stobutzki, Silvestre & Garces, 2006). However, the 2006 fisheries strategy, which FAO helped MFAR develop, paid more attention to infrastructure development, such as new landing sites, than it did to the sustainable management of fish resources. With few exceptions, FAO's subsequent project portfolio reflected that same emphasis and it appeared to the evaluators that FAO did little to question the GoSL's move to expand offshore fishing and to increase marine catches. Interviews and an analysis of FAO's portfolio of projects over the period under review also pointed to FAO's limited attention to livelihood improvement of poor coastal fishers in its regular programming.

95. The evaluation team observed that the relevance of some interventions aimed at helping those returning to farming and fishing after years of conflict could have been improved had those target populations participated in the design of the assistance packages, difficult as that may have been. For example, interviews with recipients of poultry, cattle and goats confirmed that there had been little or no consultation either about their preferences or the manner in which restocking took place. When the evaluation team visited the north and east, they learned that many beneficiaries were able to purchase livestock from neighbouring districts. This suggests that it may have been feasible for FAO to consider a cash transfer mechanism for restocking; for example, a livestock fair and voucher scheme for the target population.

96. The evaluation team questioned the relevancy of criteria used for selecting beneficiaries during the post-conflict period, as well as the fairness of the GoSL's policy, which emphasized increasing aggregate production over improving household food security for the more vulnerable such as women-headed farming households. This focus benefited some farmers more than others. For example, in 2010-2011, the government's selection criteria meant that the more land one had, the more paddy one received.<sup>12</sup> In order to have fruit trees, one had to have title to land; in order to receive livestock, one had to have resources to build shelters; and in order to get pumps, one had to pay 50 percent of the cost of a new one. Had there been safety nets or better targeted programming in place, some of FAO's post-conflict programming, that targeted in many cases more capable households, may have been more appropriate in the north and east, and better aligned with FAO's pro-poor mandate.

97. In the same vein, the evaluation team questions why FAO paid relatively little attention to the landless, particularly to those without land in the estates sector (populations working on plantations) where poverty levels are the highest in the country, according to the Department of Census and Statistics (2010).<sup>13</sup> Similarly, the country programme appears to have confined its activities largely to short-term relief and rehabilitation efforts with only a peripheral role in long-term poverty reduction initiatives, such as those involving the WB.

98. An assessment by FAO staff in the Colombo office concluded that less than a quarter of FAO's 56 regional and global projects were relevant to Sri Lanka's needs and priorities. Some staff told the evaluators that regional and global projects appeared to be supply-driven and suggested the need for more involvement from the country office at the concept stage. As regional projects are often driven by priority areas identified at regional conferences, ensuring that FAO Representatives participate in those conferences could help to minimize this perceived shortcoming.<sup>14</sup>

#### ***4.2 Programming Effectiveness***

99. The evaluation team finds FAO to have made a significant contribution to food production and asset replacement following civil conflict and natural disasters. Although FAO frequently achieved project outputs and targets, the achievement of outcomes, particularly those related to changes in practice, was often unclear and the quality of programming uneven.

100. The evaluation team finds FAO's performance weak overall as the cluster co-lead for agriculture and food security in Sri Lanka.

101. The evaluation team notes that FAO's partnerships with GoSL line agencies resulted in a close working relationship, but relatively little policy influence.

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<sup>12</sup> Not until 2011-2012 did everyone receive the same paddy package.

<sup>13</sup> At the time of the evaluation mission, an IFAD-funded project (UTF /SRL/058/SRL) was dealing with land tenure issues in Sri Lanka's dry zone, but showed few signs of scaling up or of serving the interests of landless within the estates sector.

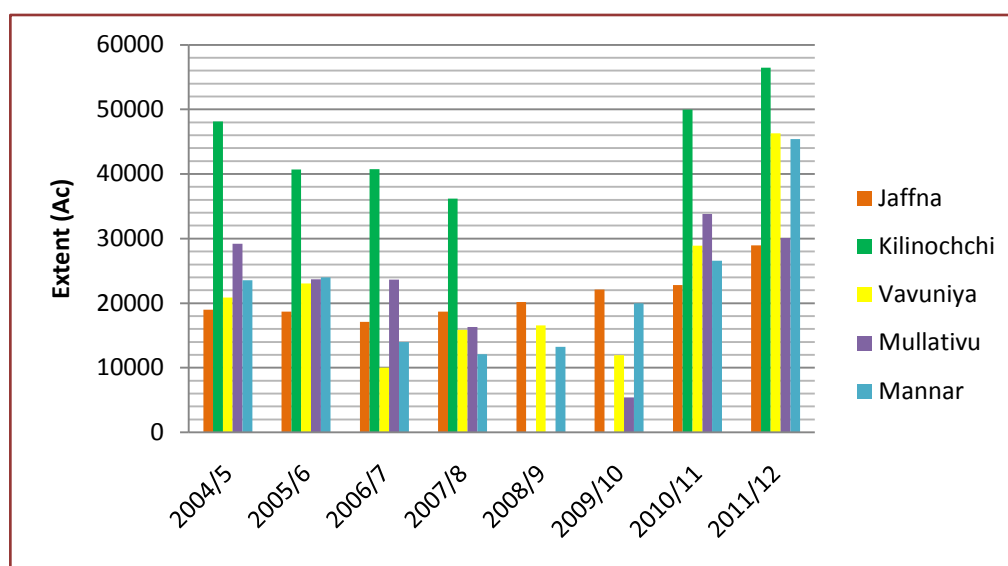
<sup>14</sup> Representatives do not participate in regional conferences because of budget restrictions, according to stakeholders interviewed by the evaluation team.

4.2.1 *Strengths*

102. Prior to 2006, FAO had a relatively small, low-profile programme in Sri Lanka. That changed when it took on a lead role in harnessing donor support in tsunami-affected areas of the country and when it picked up the GoSL’s initiatives aimed at rehabilitating agricultural production following the end of conflict in May 2009.

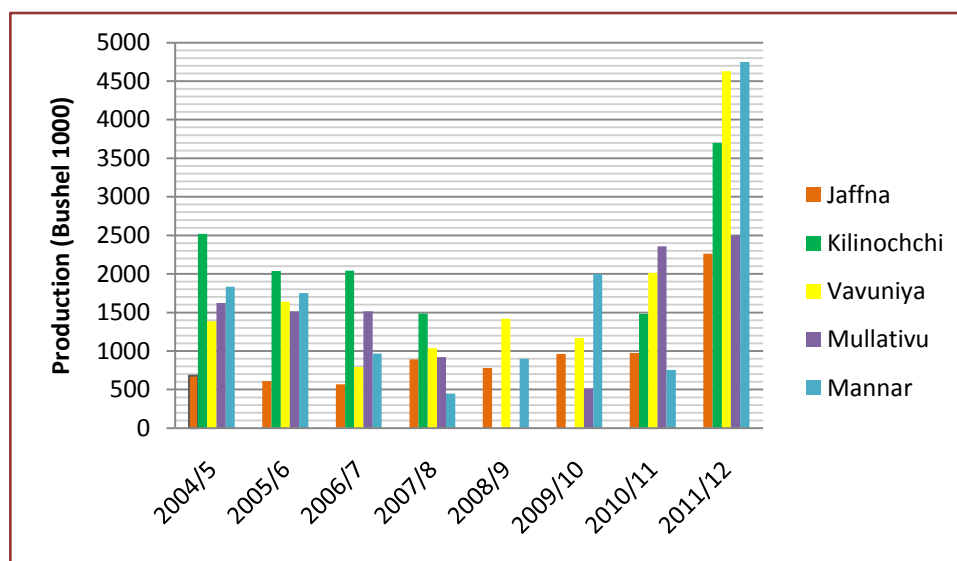
103. FAO’s efforts significantly increased access to cleared land, seeds and planting materials in the north and east for a large proportion of the population. For example, as shown in Figures 5, total cultivation in the *Maha* season of 2010-2011 was 162,000 acres in Northern Province, a significant increase from 59,000 acres in the previous year, owing in part to FAO assistance in seed and other inputs. However, as shown in Figure 6, production of paddy declined in some districts of the province because of serious flooding. Yet overall production was still higher than in the previous *Maha* season and was vital for food security in conflict-affected areas. As Figure 5 illustrates, the *Maha* season 2011-2012 showed nearly a 300 percent increase in paddy extents compared to 2006, owing to use of high quality seed paddy and other inputs from FAO, along with subsidized fertilizer supplied through the government’s *Mahinda Chintana* programme. FAO’s initiative eased the burden on the state to ensure provision of seeds to needy farmers, season after season.

**Figure 5. Paddy Cultivated Land Extent–*Maha* Season, Northern Province (2004-05 to 2011-012)**



Sources: 2004/5-2010/11 data, Dept. of Commerce Sri Lanka, 2012; 2011/12 data from Dept of Agriculture, 2012

Figure 6. Paddy Production – Maha Season, Northern Province



Sources: 2004/5-2010/11 data, Dept. of Commerce Sri Lanka, 2012; 2011/12 data from Dept of Agriculture, 2012

104. FAO interventions improved access to irrigation water for many farmers, particularly in the east where the interventions are likely to increase food production in the medium and long term, according to government spokespersons and many other stakeholders interviewed. For example, FAO rehabilitated 54 small tanks in the two districts of Trincomalee and Batticaloa under a project (GCP/SRL/059/EC) funded by the European Commission (EC). This project laid the ground for longer-term food production by irrigating over 2,450 ha of farmland. This one project alone served 25,426 resettled farmers of which 42 percent were women.

105. FAO was successful in strengthening the GoSL's capacity to utilize the genetic potential of local dairy cattle. FAO Sri Lanka's TCP, which supported dairy cattle genetic improvement in 2010-2011, recognized that good nutrition and reproductive health are required if genetic potential is to be realized. The research and training on these aspects of dairy production contributed to the project's effectiveness, enabling it to exceed its target of 2,500 cows for performance testing. Sri Lanka is now using elite cows as 'bull mothers' and their progeny will be utilised in artificial insemination centres. The project effectively trained and equipped DAPH staff to carry out this work. Even though the project at first had low numbers of cattle enrolled into the recording scheme and incomplete data, a RAP technical officer helped the project get on track and meet its objectives.

106. One of FAO's most effective and most appreciated projects involved the roundup and return of stray cattle following years of conflict in the north. In 2010, FAO worked with DAPH, Government Agents, the Ministry of Defence and Livestock Breeders Cooperative Societies (LIBCO) to round up and distribute cattle to original and new owners. In interviews carried out during the evaluation, many remarked on the project's relevance and effectiveness. The stray cattle were destroying the crops of returnees; once resettled, the cattle could provide milk and income. With a relatively small investment of \$320,000, FAO rounded up about 7,300 animals and distributed them among more than 1,100 households in Kilinochchi District. It rounded up another 3,700 animals in Mullaitivu District and distributed them among 259 households there.

107. FAO drew on international expertise and resources to increase GoSL's capacity to detect and respond to highly pathogenic bird flu, as discussed in Section 4.6.4 on capacity development. FAO also helped develop Sri Lanka's National Readiness Preparation Proposal in collaboration with the UNDP and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) under the UN-REDD programme.

108. Other policy initiatives were only partially successful. For example, FAO helped Sri Lanka develop a NPFS in 2009, building on earlier successful community-level food security pilot projects.<sup>15</sup> Although the GoSL never funded the NPFS, owing in part to changes at the ministerial level, some people interviewed indicated that the government used the NPFS to develop its agriculture corporate strategy. However, the GoSL's inventory of national policies and plans related to nutrition makes no mention of the NPFS. Key FAO partners interviewed by the mission had not seen the NPFS and during a recent high-level nutrition planning event in Colombo, no one, not even the attending FAO staff member, mentioned it.

#### 4.2.2 Areas in need of improvement

109. The evaluation team found FAO's effectiveness weakened because of its limited role in selecting beneficiaries during the post-conflict period. This shortcoming, which was largely beyond its control, impeded the targeting of vulnerable groups, particularly female-headed households. During the immediate post-conflict recovery period, the GoSL's focus on increasing aggregate production rather than on improving household food security for the

*"We can only give to people who can produce something."*

- Farmers' organization president

most vulnerable led to comparatively well-resourced farmers receiving more than vulnerable farmers such as female-headed farming households. Although this strategy could be justified if there had been separate programmes targeting the most vulnerable, there were no such programmes in the districts the evaluation team visited during their mission.

110. Although the GoSL controlled the selection of beneficiaries for post-conflict relief and rehabilitation projects, an FAO evaluation of OSRO/SRL/901/SWE found that FAO's own selection criteria were too broad. The evaluation mission confirmed this when it looked at FAO's criteria for basic agricultural relief commodities and found that terms such as "returnee" covered almost everyone. Interviews and an examination of a recent World Food Programme (WFP) food security assessment for the north and east indicated that the generic criterion, "returnee", was a poor proxy for vulnerability,<sup>16</sup> given that households had been displaced for variable periods of time, some experiencing much more asset depletion than others. However, assistance provided blanket coverage and was, for the most part, not tailored to meet specific needs.

111. Other processes for beneficiary selection undermined FAO's overall effectiveness. For example, the evaluators found instances where landowner farmers received seed quotas beyond their requirements and where some who had no intention to recommence farming

<sup>15</sup> Special Programme for Food Security, 2002-2008 (GCP/SRL/049/JPN). Independent evaluation 2009.

<sup>16</sup> The mission noted considerable variability in what was considered as "returnee". For instance, the designation included government staff returning to the north, people who had been displaced to the closest urban area, people who had been displaced several decades before, and people who had been only temporarily displaced, that is during the most acute period of the recent civil conflict 2006-2009.

received seeds. Similarly, 150 grape growers, who are comparatively well-off, in Jaffna District benefited from FAO's assistance. This appeared to the evaluation team to be at odds with FAO's mandate to focus on food security and the needs of the most vulnerable.

112. Although women represent half the adult population and female-headed households were common in the north following the conflict, FAO's effectiveness at targeting women in agriculture, fisheries and forestry was poor. Where efforts were made in poultry raising and home gardening, for example, women were not consulted beforehand; many of the chicks provided to them died; and training and follow-up support were sporadic, according to many of the beneficiaries interviewed by the evaluation team.

113. A key role of FAO is to bring global good practice and knowledge to its country programmes. However, the mission found relatively little evidence that FAO had disseminated its normative work effectively at the country level.<sup>17</sup> For example, although FAO provided logistical support for vulnerability assessments following the period of conflict, it neither engaged substantively in them nor ensured that its own standards and tools were used.<sup>18</sup> The evaluation team also noted that FAO had neither created nor disseminated much new knowledge in Sri Lanka during the period under review.

114. FAO had limited effectiveness in policy advocacy between 2006 and 2011, even though it developed one of the strongest relationships with the GoSL of all UNCT members, according to many stakeholders. The Organization had opportunities to influence policy through, for example, its participation in the PTF and other coordination mechanisms at the national, provincial, district and divisional levels. Interviews with FAO staff indicated that the GoSL used these fora largely to share project information and to obtain necessary approval with little time for policy discussion. To paraphrase a senior FAO staff member, "We were told what to do but not how to do it, and a whole lot of assumptions were made about capacities that did not reflect realities on the ground." The evaluation team thought FAO could have done more in collaboration with other UNCT members to insist that the GoSL follow well-established principles and codes of conduct in its rehabilitation initiatives after May 2009. The evaluators return to this issue in Section 4.6.5.

115. Although FAO's livestock initiatives in Sri Lanka have been reasonably effective overall, the evaluation team found room for improvement in FAO's post-conflict livestock sector rehabilitation in Northern Province. There, in collaboration with DAPH, FAO attempted to restock 13,826 households with about 320,000 chicks between 2010 and mid-2012. The numbers of chicks distributed increased three-fold in 2011 to a total of 230,050 birds. For 2011, the numbers of chicks distributed averaged just over 19,000 birds per month or about 220 households per week across the province (see Figure 7). Although these figures are commendable, this major initiative could have been more effective in several areas as follows.

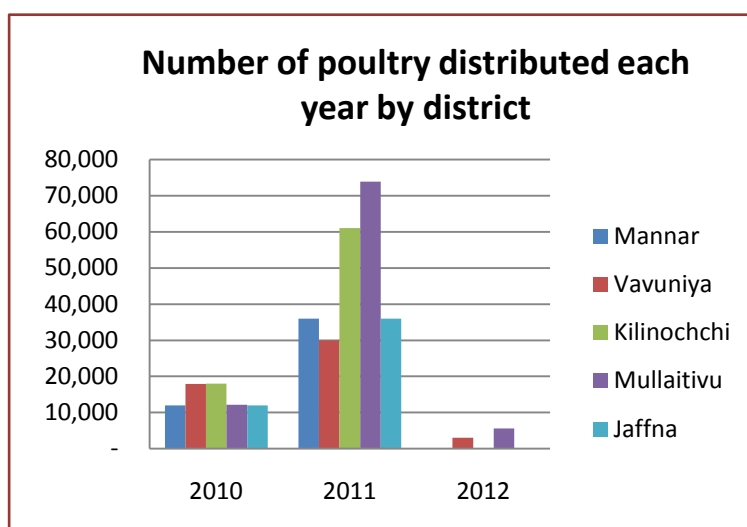
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<sup>17</sup> Among the exceptions were some of FAO's initiatives related to statistics and land tenure.

<sup>18</sup> Examples of these include FAO's livelihood assessment toolkit, integrated humanitarian phase classification system, climate change impact assessment framework, market price monitoring tools, and hunger scales.



Figure 7. Number of Poultry Distributed each Year by District



Source: Compilation of data from FAO monitoring reports, Vavuniya, Jan 2010- May 2012

116. A more detailed vulnerability assessment, in consultation with the target population, could have allowed packages to be varied according to vulnerability. For example, more vulnerable households might have received more chick feed, more shed building materials or even a fully constructed shed. This approach could also have applied to the cattle and goat restocking. The evaluation team recognized that the blanket coverage was

a practical option when large numbers of birds needed to be distributed on short notice and with relatively few staff to do the work. However, the scale of this operation proved unmanageable at times and many of the chicks died. It could have been more effective in meeting the needs of the vulnerable if it had been scaled back and slowed down.

117. Poultry training was usually very brief and could have been better planned and implemented. FAO did not undertake a formal training needs assessment and produced no assessment of the effectiveness of the training. Investment in monitoring systems could have been made sooner and more effective. Most of the earlier projects ended once the birds had been distributed, making it impossible to monitor what happened afterwards. From 2010, scarcity of staff time and weak systems impeded post-distribution follow-up and feedback. This poor oversight prevented the timely identification of problems such as the exceptionally high rate of chick mortality, particularly for FAO's USAID-funded projects. To its credit, FAO recognised this problem and has since improved its monitoring system.

118. In interviews with stakeholders in the field, the evaluators learned that FAO and its government partners sometimes failed to select the most appropriate water tanks for rehabilitation and in several instances selected inexperienced contractors to do the work.<sup>19</sup> Such shortcomings reduced the potential effectiveness of several water projects that FAO supported. The effectiveness of much of FAO's short-term training in these projects was questionable. For example, FAO trained members of 416 farmers' organizations on rehabilitation contract works, organizational and financial management and water management. The evaluation team found little evidence that trainees were applying the knowledge gained, owing in part to other more urgent priorities, according to the spokespersons interviewed from several farmer organizations. The evaluators found similar patterns of questionable effectiveness resulting from training in other sub-sectors.

<sup>19</sup> The *Katuthennamarippu* tank rehabilitation in Trincomalee district is a clear example. Beneficiaries there disputed the selected contractor and found his work to be sub-standard. They complained to political representatives, but to no avail.

119. Although FAO's projects often met their output targets, the evaluators found scant evidence that they had achieved their intended outcomes. FAO's work in fisheries serves as an example. FAO provided technical training in areas such as fish stock assessments, post-harvest quality control and food safety and long-line tuna quality preservation. FAO built fish landing sites and provided iceboxes and pallets to help restore the fishing industry. Although most beneficiaries told the evaluators that they gained significantly from such initiatives, the evaluators found little documented or observable evidence to verify that FAO had achieved intended developmental outcomes, such as improved community livelihoods, sustainable fisheries resource use and enhanced access to domestic and foreign markets.

120. The evaluation team found mixed reviews of FAO's effectiveness as the cluster lead agency for agriculture and food security in Sri Lanka.<sup>20</sup> On the positive side, FAO played an active role in the preparation of annual UN Consolidated Appeals. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), which was in charge of the Consolidated Humanitarian Assistance Programme (CHAP) in Sri Lanka, noted with appreciation FAO's contribution.<sup>21</sup> The evaluation team also found FAO to have played a positive role in raising funds for agreed plans and in keeping the UN country team abreast of the situation with respect to the resettlement of IDPs. FAO also conveyed government policies to other partners and at times facilitated discussions on the contents of livelihood assistance packages for returnees.

121. Although most stakeholders perceived FAO as an active and valued participant in coordination clusters, its performance as a co-leader was weak and under-resourced, according to many people interviewed.<sup>22</sup> Most agreed that recovery efforts in Sri Lanka could have been enhanced had FAO paid more attention to the full scope of its convening responsibilities such as support for needs assessments, sharing of technical guidelines and support for training and capacity development among humanitarian partners, mapping of sectoral partners work, and engagement in policy issues that are crucial for sustainable recovery for the conflict-affected fishers, herders and farmers.

122. FAO's role as the cluster co-lead appeared to the evaluators weakest at the district level. Interviews in the north and east confirmed that UN agencies other than FAO led most of the district meetings and that FAO's efforts to establish and coordinate district-level clusters were limited. Some stakeholders noted an apparent absence of regular communication and reporting mechanisms between Colombo and the districts. Cluster coordinators and district focal points told the evaluators that FAO viewed these responsibilities as add-ons to their regular jobs and that FAO provided little guidance on setting priorities. The evaluation team found little evidence of backstopping support from RAP or from HQ for this function and no measures in place to hold the country office accountable for its performance as the cluster lead.

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<sup>20</sup> The agriculture and food security cluster was amalgamated in the latter part of 2009 with the food cluster led by WFP, and in 2011 with the early recovery cluster led by UNDP. At the time of the mission, it was co-chaired by all three agencies and met every month.

<sup>21</sup> The fact that FAO's response was embedded in a multi-sectoral assessment was also noted as positive in the CERF evaluation.

<sup>22</sup> Only one of FAO's projects - OSRO/SRL/701 - dealt with FAO's coordination role in a substantive manner. Multi-sectoral recovery projects OSRO/SRL/603, OSRO/SRL/702, 704, 802 and 001 each had coordination as a component, but FAO used resources for coordination almost exclusively at the Colombo level to cover the cost of personnel and other expenses related to coordination.

123. The evaluators found limited participation of FAO in other cluster initiatives in Colombo and in the field, such as the protection working group and advocacy task force, both coordinated by UNHCR. These bodies dealt with gender, vulnerability and protection concerns as well as with issues related to land documentation and access, all of which are central to FAO's mandate.

124. Published by the UN a decade ago, *Building Partnerships* (Nelson, 2002) makes a compelling case that partnerships between the UN system and governments, business and civil society organisations, offer one of the greatest hopes for meeting the global challenges of the 21st century. Most development organizations recognize that effective partnerships are crucial for successful international cooperation. How effective were FAO's partnerships in Sri Lanka?

*"The UN once dealt only with governments. By now we know that peace and prosperity cannot be achieved without partnerships involving governments, international organizations, the business community and civil society."*

Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary-General

125. FAO partnered with government, international NGOs and national NGOs for the post-tsunami recovery projects and, as noted earlier, these partnerships appear to have fostered reasonably effective programming. FAO's constructive relationships with government in particular aided FAO's timely response to populations returning to their homes following Sri Lanka's internal conflict. The relationships also provided FAO with access to high-level decision making within the GoSL. FAO also had constructive relations and good cooperation with other UN organizations, according to interviews carried out by the evaluation team, even though they resulted in joint projects only recently.

*"FAO has no agenda, unlike the other UN agencies. They fully support government's agenda and we would rank them as number one."*

- Senior GoSL official

126. FAO's post-conflict partnerships with government line departments in the east and north, however strong they may have been, were limiting. The quality and effectiveness of some of FAO's initiatives were compromised by the weak capacity of some government partners and turnover at decision-making levels, according to FAO staff in Colombo and in the field. More generally, FAO and

other organizations involved in the rehabilitation of returnees were hampered by their inability to influence project designs, select beneficiaries and effectively monitor implementation.

127. Despite good relationships with government line departments, FAO had relatively little success fostering inter-departmental, inter-agency and cross-sector coordination needed to deal effectively with such important matters as coastal fisheries and ecosystem sustainability.

128. FAO has recently established new partnerships with community-based organizations (CBOs) and NGOs in the east and to a lesser extent in the north, but the evaluation team questioned why FAO did not engage with more NGOs and CBOs, such as farmer organizations, sooner. Part of the answer lies in the fact that the PTF at first restricted NGO activity in Northern Province and prevented FAO from partnering with them. But the

evaluation team is of the view that FAO could have pressed government harder on this issue, as UNDP did.

129. Several stakeholders told the evaluation team that of all UN organizations FAO had the best relations with government, and at all levels. The evaluation team does not dispute this claim. However, given that FAO had built a solid relationship of trust with the GoSL and that it had regular access to high-level decision makers, why did it not have much influence on government policy? Although relatively few of FAO's projects dealt with policy issues and despite the crisis mode of programming in 2009 when the number of returnees spiked dramatically, the FAOR and his senior staff had regular engagement with GoSL officials and were in a position to influence policies related to sustainable agriculture, fisheries and forestry. Perhaps part of the answer lies in the fact that FAO had only limited engagement with some of the most powerful ministries, such as the Ministry of Finance and Planning (MoFP) and the Ministry of Economic Development. The evaluation team noted that FAO had no partnerships with the Ministry of Women's Affairs, even though this ministry was involved in rural agricultural development initiatives targeted at vulnerable women.

130. Many of FAO's regional and global projects operating in Sri Lanka featured South-South partnerships, but such partnerships were not a feature in many of FAO's country projects, even though the value of South-South partnerships is well recognized.<sup>23</sup> In the fisheries sub-sector, the evaluation team noted some collaboration with regional bodies, but saw the scope for much more.

131. FAO had relatively few successful partnerships with private-sector organizations in Sri Lanka – its recent partnerships with LIBCO being a noteworthy exception. The same applies to academic institutions. Several other UN agencies told the evaluation team that partnerships with national think tanks and centres of knowledge and learning were becoming increasingly important as their work shifted from service delivery to policy and programme assistance in recent years.

### ***4.3 Programming Efficiency***

132. The evaluation team considers that FAO's programme achieved overall timely delivery of recovery inputs, realizing efficiencies by utilizing government mechanisms and by sharing facilities with other organizations. However, many short-term projects contributed to unevenness in the efficient use of resources.

#### ***4.3.1 Strengths***

133. One of FAO's most notable successes during the period under review was its timely delivery of recovery inputs following natural disasters and conflict. FAO was fast off the mark to write proposals, raise funds locally, procure inputs and deliver needed supplies in order to boost agriculture production and thus secure food for thousands of Sri Lankans in the north and east. The country programme was also efficient in its use of the GoSL's delivery systems and staffing structures when providing seeds and other agricultural inputs to households in the immediate post-conflict period. Compared with other agencies, this

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<sup>23</sup> See for example, Bilal, S. (2012). *The rise of South-South relations: Development partnerships reconsidered*. Maastricht: European Centre for Development Policy Management.

approach allowed FAO to avoid many bottlenecks and to gain access through government personnel to affected communities quickly under extremely difficult conditions.<sup>24</sup> One of FAO's resource partners told the evaluation team that FAO's projects were, in her experience, more efficient than those of most NGOs operating in the country.

134. Partners and beneficiaries interviewed reported that FAO provided assistance on time, although there appears to have been some delay in initiating resettlement activities in 2008 in the east, where the conflict ended earlier than in the north. Some projects had a slow start owing in part to the lengthy approval processes within the MoFP. This slowness may partially account for the fact that 40 out of 62 FAO country projects implemented over the past six years have required no-cost extensions.

135. FAO's resource partners interviewed by the evaluation team in Sri Lanka were generally satisfied with FAO's performance, including its efficiency. Two spoke of reporting delays and some noted that the country office often had to "go to Rome and back" for approvals, but these delays did not appear to have been major impediments.

136. Many stakeholders interviewed noted that FAO realized considerable cost-efficiencies by working from the UN compound in Colombo where it had access to common meeting rooms, transportation, security and other facilities. The FAO's successful efforts to combine emergency operations with the regular programme in Sri Lanka likely contributed to greater efficiency as well.

#### *4.3.2 Areas in need of improvement*

137. The most serious challenge to programming efficiency was FAO's high number of short-term projects during the reporting period. The evaluation team noted that the majority of country-specific projects ran for two years or less and that almost half had budgets of less than \$500,000. Regardless of the length and value of FAO's projects, each came with high transaction costs, such as the time and effort required to make proposals, raise funds, mobilize consultants and materials, monitor and report on results and demobilize. Although FAO had little control over donor funding criteria for emergency-related projects, the evaluation team thought it could, in some cases, have pressed for longer, larger projects which focussed more on transitioning from relief to development. Discussions with top officials in the GoSL confirmed the need for investments in programmes rather than in short- and medium-term projects. The team also thought that the UNCT could have been more creative in pooling funds and resources toward more efficient delivery of services as the EC has recently proposed.

138. Where FAO used internal resources, the country programme faced similar inefficiencies. TCP projects were small for the most part and staff in both the RAP and country office indicated that TCP facility procedures and formats were cumbersome, requiring too much time and effort for the small amounts of money involved.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> In the post-conflict period in Northern Province, FAO had no choice; the GoSL disallowed NGOs access until recently and even now NGOs face many restrictions.

<sup>25</sup> The country office received three TCP facility grants valued together at about \$400,000 as well as funding for about a dozen smaller projects averaging about \$30,000 each.

139. Inefficiencies were apparent to the evaluation team in FAO's approach in delivering assistance to individual households in its northern recovery programme. Interviews with stakeholders and a review of beneficiary lists showed that FAO and the GoSL identified "new returnees" as their beneficiaries each year.<sup>26</sup> The underlying assumption was that returnees needed only one year of free inputs to get back on their feet. Although there was merit in this line of reasoning, some more vulnerable groups needed longer-term support. FAO and the GoSL assisted relatively small numbers of beneficiaries in each community spread over great distances, thus increasing the cost per beneficiary reached.

#### **4.4 Programming Impact**

140. Acknowledging the difficulties of measuring impact owing to the challenges of attribution, the evaluation team considers that the FAO programme likely made a modest contribution to increased food and nutrition security and to poverty reduction in Sri Lanka.

##### **4.4.1 Strengths**

141. The evaluation team acknowledges the difficulties inherent in measuring programme impact owing not only to attribution challenges in a complex environment with many actors working toward the same or similar high-level outcomes, but also to the timing and forward-looking nature of this evaluation. Any rigorous analysis of impact would have required a quasi-experimental evaluation design and robust monitoring and baseline data, features which were largely absent from FAO's Sri Lanka programme.

142. That said, the evaluation team found reliable evidence to conclude that FAO's operations in partnership with GoSL *contributed to* much improved agricultural production in the country's north and east. As the GoSL's main resource for agricultural assistance, FAO contributed most significantly in the recovery of abandoned paddy land during and after the conflict. It also facilitated the provision of input supplies to resettling farming communities to recommence food production for greater food security. FAO's agricultural water management interventions have contributed to achieving a surplus in rice and improving the living conditions of many farming communities.

*"We were able to cultivate our land only because FAO helped us clear the paddy land."*

- beneficiary, Trincomalee

143. Another major achievement was FAO's support for diversified farming, which contributed to increased production of staple and non-staple crops, including such nutritious foods as black gram, vegetables and fruits. Three national projects<sup>27</sup> in the north and east were specifically designed to improve nutritional status. Outputs<sup>28</sup> included more than 35,000 households having access to vegetable seeds and more than 5,500 fruit trees delivered at the community level. Although too early to measure, some of FAO's community-level training related to nutrition, food processing and conservation through half a dozen projects have the potential to contribute to better consumption patterns, improved annual food stability and increased incomes as value additions generate extra revenue for households.

<sup>26</sup> The exception is that after the floods at the end of 2010, some beneficiaries from that year who had lost much of their production were again targeted in 2011 for relief assistance.

<sup>27</sup> GCP /SRL/059/EC, OSRO/SRL/002/CHA, OSRO/SRL/604/CHA

<sup>28</sup> Data extracted from project terminal reports where available on FPMIS.

144. An additional high-level accomplishment was FAO's role in encouraging investment in agriculture through its support for national projects financed by the World Bank and the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme. Interviews with stakeholders confirmed that FAO's support to the GoSL in helping it mobilize substantial resources from these sources was greatly appreciated by both the government and the IFIs alike.

145. With regard to fisheries, FAO's initiatives had modest impacts. For example, FAO helped develop a fisheries strategy in 2006, but it had relatively little uptake by the GoSL. The same applies to FAO's CCRF work. The independent evaluation of FAO's CCRF initiatives in Sri Lanka concluded that the Organization improved GoSL's policies and regulatory frameworks, but had little influence on fishing practices or on advancing the sustainable management of fisheries resources (FAO, 2012a).

146. Since most of FAO's work in forestry began recently in Sri Lanka, it is too early to assess its impact.

#### *4.4.2 Areas in need of improvement*

147. FAO's contribution to increased food and nutrition security and poverty reduction was less than it might have been – in part because of insufficient attention to targeting women and other vulnerable groups. The challenges FAO encountered in ensuring that interventions were directed toward the most vulnerable populations are described in Section 4.2. FAO's work with one vulnerable group, small-scale fishers, illustrates this shortcoming.

148. With the exception of the Regional Fisheries Livelihoods Programme and the Inland Aquaculture Plan for the Northern Province, FAO gave little attention to improving the livelihoods of poorer coastal fishers and other economically disadvantaged groups, including women.<sup>29</sup> Coastal ecosystems have been important for small-scale fishers' income generation and food security. The decline in coastal fisheries stocks has disproportionately affected poorer fishers who use non- or low-motor craft in coastal waters and whose families depend predominantly on fishing for their livelihood.

149. FAO's project entitled, Minimum Standards for Fish Handling and Reduced Post-harvest Losses in Selected Tsunami-affected Communities (GCP/SRL/056/SPA), began in mid-2009, rather late after the tsunami despite that disaster's heavy impact on small-scale fisher communities. Interviews conducted by the evaluation team at project sites in Trincomalee and Batticaloa districts found that the project benefited mostly wealthier multi-day boat fishers and traders. Although multi-day boat fishers and traders have continued to use the knowledge and supplies gained through the project, they have done so mainly for export purposes, rather than for local consumption.

150. FAO failed to take up some important policy and advocacy issues that may have increased its impact on food and nutrition security and poverty reduction. For example, the Organization was mute when the GoSL prohibited households from fishing in conflict areas and where, until recently, it restricted the use of beaches and mangroves, thus depriving fishers of their livelihoods.

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<sup>29</sup> However, the Regional Fisheries Livelihoods Programme's livelihoods diversification activities and the benefits from them have been relatively small, according to project documents and stakeholder interviews.

151. Another factor that weakened FAO's impact on food and nutrition security and poverty reduction was insufficient and timely attention to agricultural marketing. In the years following conflict, agricultural markets were volatile, owing largely to rapid increases in food availability and an unstable policy environment. At the time of the evaluation mission, the market price for rice and other staples was low, heightening the investment risks for farmers. Food surpluses generated in 2012 did not, as expected, translate into optimal levels of income for farmers and this in turn increased debt levels for the most vulnerable and impeded access to agricultural input and food markets for consumption. Many cash-strapped farmers fell prey to speculators who purchased their paddy at prices far below the market value.

152. Had FAO examined alternative means of marketing, such as by value addition, and had it done more to strengthen extension services to help both male and female farmers negotiate with traders and deal with storage problems, it may have had a greater impact on poverty reduction and economic growth. However, as described earlier, the bulk of FAO's programming was focused on relief and rehabilitation efforts in response to natural disasters and conflict, with relatively little attention to national agricultural policies, extension services and marketing concerns and with inadequate targeting of the most vulnerable populations.

#### **4.5 Programming Sustainability**

153. The evaluation team finds FAO's country programme's performance mixed with respect to sustainability.

##### **4.5.1 *Strengths***

154. In 1988, the 94<sup>th</sup> Session of the FAO Council defined sustainable development as:

The management and conservation of the natural resource base, and the orientation of technological and institutional change in such a manner as to ensure the attainment of continued satisfaction of human needs for present and future generations. Such sustainable development conserves (land,) water, plants and (animal,) genetic resources, is environmentally non-degrading, technologically appropriate, economically viable and socially acceptable (FAO, 1988).

155. Although this definition has endured, and FAO has continued to emphasize sustainability,<sup>30</sup> understanding of sustainable development and how to measure it have evolved since then. Evaluators determine whether the development initiative harmed the environment for present and future generations, but they also examine the sustainability of results, asking what benefits will continue after the initial development investments end. One way analysts get at this latter issue is by assessing the degree of local ownership and commitment to the development initiative. Strong local ownership and commitment is often an accurate proxy measure for sustainable results. The Sri Lanka country evaluation team has approached the issue of sustainability from these perspectives.

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<sup>30</sup> 'Sustainable' appears five times in FAO's Strategic Objectives, and is used to delineate crop production, livestock production, management and use of fisheries and aquaculture and the management of forests and trees.



156. A good example of sustainability comes from FAO's work on seed varieties. That FAO helped to improve the quality of seeds for farmers and that it cleared large tracts of abandoned land for cultivation represent an important contribution to ongoing agriculture productivity, likely without damaging the environment for future generations. Many farmers will continue to benefit from the genetic base material FAO provided. Barring natural disasters, the GoSL will likely need additional seed supplies only for the remaining Sri Lankans awaiting resettlement following conflict. As well, this initiative eased the burden on the state to provide seeds to farmers' season after season.

157. Another example of sustainability is FAO's dairy genetics project where the DAPH committed about \$98,000 to continue the pedigree and performance recording scheme begun by FAO. The evaluation team learned that DAPH submitted a proposal for \$1.9 million of extra funding to the Cabinet of Ministers in order to upscale the project to cover many more districts. If successful, this initiative will allow the department to increase the use of improved stud bulls adapted to local conditions.<sup>31</sup>

158. The evaluation team found evidence of sustainability in the GoSL's ownership of the FAO-supported food security assessments in the north and east. In 2011, the government took full responsibility for the assessment and appeal processes and, together with partners, developed the Joint Plan for Assistance to Northern Province.

159. The evaluation team also found evidence suggesting a degree of sustainability in the FAO-supported dissemination of technical knowledge and training related to fish stock assessments, seafood traceability and post-harvest quality enhancements. Interviews with NARA and DFAR staff confirmed that FAO-trained personnel from those institutions and others continue to use the knowledge and equipment FAO provided and continue to provide training to their own staff and fisher groups. It remains too early, however, to assess the sustainability of the aquaculture and recent forest-related projects.

#### *4.5.2 Areas in need of improvement*

160. The evaluation team found no evidence of FAO's projects having directly caused environment degradation in Sri Lanka, but FAO had no rigorous system in place with which to consistently assess the potential environmental impacts of its projects prior to implementation and, more generally, it paid secondary attention to environmental concerns when designing its projects.<sup>32,33</sup> There were, however, notable exceptions to this

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<sup>31</sup> The sustainability of this project is, however, threatened by a new government initiative. The GoSL recently began importing exotic high yielding dairy cows to be milked on government farms and used to supply breeding stock to Sri Lankan farmers. The army announced plans for a similar scheme as part of a drive for self-sufficiency in milk production. Previous imports of high-producing cattle to Sri Lanka have been unsuccessful but if on this occasion, the imported stock do reproduce and milk well, then large government/army-owned farms could potentially undermine demand for milk from the small-scale producers who FAO's 'Pedigree and Performance Recording Scheme' was designed to support.

<sup>32</sup> When the evaluation team visited a community in Batticaloa, which was part of an EU-funded recovery project, it learned that several households were cutting forest trees to sell as fuel wood because FAO's recovery inputs had not provided them with sufficient income. Some households were clearing forest areas illegally to plant paddy.

<sup>33</sup> FAO published guidelines for environmental impact assessments of field projects, but not until September 2011.

generalization. For example, the country office undertook environmental assessments before distributing more than 4,000 pumps funded by USAID for post-conflict rehabilitation.

161. FAO's government partners and resource partners bear some of the responsibility for FAO's mixed performance with regard to environmental sustainability. This weakness in the country programme can, in part, also be traced to the short-term nature of the majority of FAO's projects and pressure to implement quickly.

162. Members of the evaluation team were concerned about what they perceived to be relatively little attention to resilient livelihoods and disaster risk reduction in FAO's recovery programming in the north and east, even though FAO is one of the most preeminent global organizations to espouse these concepts. For example, FAO neglected to build long-term sustainability measures into its fisheries projects following the 2004 tsunami, despite evidence of Sri Lanka's continued vulnerability to coastal natural disasters. FAO may have indirectly contributed to the depletion of Sri Lanka's fish stocks by emphasizing (at government's and donors' request) asset replacement and the development of new fish-landing infrastructure rather than encouraging alternatives to off-shore fishing. FAO was in a strong position to influence GoSL's decision-making on such matters having established a good relationship with MFAR. Similarly, the country programme as a whole paid little attention to climate change, which is bound to negatively impact Sri Lanka's agricultural, forestry and fisheries yields in the years to come.

163. The evaluation team was concerned about the sustainability of the country programme's many short-term projects focused on technical training. They found only a few examples of enduring benefits from training, in part because the country office only recently began tracking trainees systematically to assess outcomes in the workplace. Where the evaluation team met with people who had been trained, the results were often less than ideal. For example, the small number of fishers and government staff trained were using new knowledge and skills, but their agencies faced difficulties in extending the training to others. The training on agricultural statistical methods has not as yet had any follow up. Members of farmers' organizations who had received training to manage water schemes were not applying what they learned, according to interviews undertaken during site visits.

164. As noted elsewhere in this report, the benefits from FAO's livestock programming were not always assured of sustainability, because of mortality and marketing issues, the cost of maintenance, and inadequate attention to animal reproduction. With respect to paddy irrigation tank rehabilitation, during their field visit, members of the evaluation team noted that cattle and elephants had already damaged the bunds on several water tanks that FAO had restored – to such an extent that their sustainability was in doubt.

165. An effective development practice for sustainability is to prepare an exit strategy. The evaluation team found little evidence of these in any of FAO's projects. Where they did, the examples were far from ideal. For instance, the EC-funded \$7.8 million project to enhance food security among the most vulnerable farm families in eastern Sri Lanka (GCP/SRL/059/EC) held an "exit strategy workshop" in Kandy in April 2011, marking the end of the project. The one-day event consisted mainly of presentations by academics and officials with little sign of any commitment from government to sustain or expand on the project's successes. No clear commitment was evident in the workshop report as to who would take responsibility for operation and maintenance of the rehabilitated water tanks.

166. Although the GoSL as FAO's primary implementing partner had ownership and control over most of FAO's emergency relief and rehabilitation projects, a fact that bodes well for sustainability, Sri Lanka funded only one (UTF/SRL/058/SRL) of FAO's country projects during the period under review. That project dealt with land tenure issues, which are critical to the sustainability of Sri Lanka's agricultural sector, but it is unlikely to foster much government reform once the project ends, according to interviews carried out on site by the evaluation team.

167. The development community recognizes that participation of target communities in project planning and design is important for sustainability. Here, FAO's performance was mixed as well. For instance, FAO's rehabilitation projects in the east had transparent community participation processes to identify beneficiaries in need of support. Farmers' organizations played an important role in beneficiary selection with assistance from the respective *Grama Niladari*, the central government-appointed village leader. However, the evaluation team found no evidence of community participation in the selection of water tanks for rehabilitation in the east. This oversight likely undermined sustainability as communities complained about some inappropriate sites and the shoddy quality of some of the construction work, according to interviews carried out by the evaluation team. Community participation in many post-conflict projects was weak, and not only those supported by FAO. A UN representative with wide-ranging global experience reported that Sri Lanka was the worst country he had been in with respect to the application of participatory processes in humanitarian assistance.<sup>34</sup>

*"We were able to do [basic] needs assessment. It was not possible during the first returns, but became possible thereafter. Even when lists are given we were able to re-check and verify"*

- NGO worker in Kilinochchi.

#### **4.6 Other Programming Issues**

##### **4.6.1 *Programme vision and strategy***

168. The evaluation finds the country programme without an over-arching programme strategy for the period under review. Although FAO had a well-crafted northern recovery and rehabilitation programme, priorities appear to have been established largely in response to government requests and on the basis of available resources. The evaluation team finds the draft Country Programme Framework weak in its analysis and strategy and out of step with FAO guidelines in both content and process.

169. Throughout the period under review, FAO had no overarching vision and strategy to guide its work in Sri Lanka. At the time of the evaluation mission a CPF was in draft form with an expected completion of June 2012. Past programming decisions were based largely on requests from government and available resources, according to staff interviewed. Stakeholders told the evaluation team that government requests to FAO for assistance stemmed mainly from an analysis of funding gaps with little consideration of FAO's comparative advantages and its normative role.

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<sup>34</sup> Although all agencies have encountered problems, some agencies such as CARE appear to have been more successful in establishing participatory practices to determine beneficiaries and to monitor outcomes.

170. FAO's country office prepared a solid multi-year plan, the *Recovery and Rehabilitation Programme for the Agricultural Sector in Conflict-affected Areas of Northern Sri Lanka* (FAO, 2009a) immediately after the end of the conflict, but expediency ruled decision making under pressure from government and resource partners eager to deliver assistance quickly. Three years after the conflict, the country office has yet to update its analysis on the needs of farming groups in the north and east and to revise its plan for rehabilitation work there. It has no clearly differentiated strategy for tackling food and nutrition insecurity and rural development. In the absence of an over-arching strategy, the links between FAO's policy and development work, largely resourced through TCPs, and its recovery interventions are unclear. For example, FAO's project on land tenure in the drylands does not appear to be linked to post-recovery efforts or to be part of a larger policy agenda.

171. Although FAO HQ has encouraged country-level strategic planning since 2006 as part of its decentralization agenda, FAO's Sri Lanka office has been slow to respond.<sup>35</sup> Some of the reasons for this include Sri Lanka's volatile context, which inhibits longer term planning, gaps in FAOR leadership between 2006 and 2008, little pressure or support from HQ until recently,<sup>36</sup> and the changing nature of FAO's planning model.<sup>37</sup> The UNDAF 2008-2012 serves as an example of the difficulty all UN agencies faced with long-term planning. The UNDAF was developed during a period of relative peace, but quickly became outdated when conflict escalated in the north and east of the country. Several UN stakeholders told the evaluation team that the UNDAF was of little use in guiding their decision-making. That the many ministries, departments and agencies active in the agriculture sector kept shifting their priorities also presented challenges. However, the evaluation team would argue that any long-term plan needs to be adjusted as the external environment changes if it is to have practical application.

172. FAO HQ produced clear guidelines on the process and expected products of a CPF and RAP developed a companion document in 2011. The expected CPF products include a comprehensive situation analysis identifying stakeholders and the challenges and opportunities in FAOs areas of mandate, an analysis of FAO comparative advantage, FAO programming priorities, and a results matrix.<sup>38</sup> However, the Sri Lanka office appeared not to have followed some of the guidelines or the corporate timelines in preparing the CPF. For instance, the evaluation team learned that the Sri Lanka office:

- a) Met separately with four line ministries rather than with a national steering committee as suggested in the guidelines;
- b) Prepared no concept note during the initial phase, as required;
- c) Involved few programming staff in the development of the draft document, as recommended;
- d) Solicited little input from RAP during the early drafting of the CPF; and
- e) Prepared an initial draft without substantive input from the FAOR.

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<sup>35</sup> In 2006, FAO referred to these plans as National Medium-Term Priority Frameworks (NMTPF).

<sup>36</sup> Although FAO HQ has held CPF workshops in other regions, it has yet to provide assistance to the Asia-Pacific region.

<sup>37</sup> From supporting the government to prepare a national food security strategy (NPFS) to working on a joint strategy (NMTPF) to a document that reflects FAO's contribution to government strategies (CPF).

<sup>38</sup> A thematic evaluation of the NMTPF identified many weaknesses in the strategic planning process – the guidance represents learning from that evaluation.

173. The evaluation team determined that the draft CPF was aligned with GoSL priorities in the four agriculture sub-sectors selected, but lacked vision and a clear strategy. Among the document's weaknesses were an inadequate situation analysis,<sup>39</sup> insufficient mapping of what other development actors are doing in the sector, no identification of FAO's comparative advantage, an incoherent theory of change, an absence of plans for partnerships with UN, NGOs and private sector groups,<sup>40</sup> and little clarity as to FAO's focus, be it capacity development, direct household assistance and/or policy advice. The draft document was poorly written and showed a deficient understanding of basic RBM principles and terms.

174. The evaluation team considered the present state of the CPF as a serious impediment to the quality and effectiveness of FAO's future programming in Sri Lanka.

#### 4.6.2 *Project designs*

175. The evaluation team finds shortcomings in the designs of many of FAO's country projects, although it notes significant recent improvements.

176. Project strengths and failures can often be traced to the quality of the designs. For this reason, many organizations have produced practical guides intended to assist those responsible for designing projects. For example, FAO and the WB recently published *The use of monitoring and evaluation in agriculture and rural development projects. Best practices in investment design* (FAO, 2010). FAO produced its *Assessment and Programme Formulation Guidelines for Agricultural Emergencies* at the end of the period under review (FAO, 2011b).

177. AsDB, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and FAO's own guidelines for designing emergency humanitarian assistance projects have a number of common elements, such as:

- Need assessment that features participatory processes to engage intended beneficiaries;
- Situation analysis that assesses the programming context, analyzes stakeholders, identifies issues and documents what other projects are doing that is complementary;
- Capacity analysis of implementing partners;
- Gender analysis to determine the differential needs of women and men;
- Logic model that clearly articulate realistic outcomes and programming focus;
- Robust monitoring and evaluation plan;
- Provisions to ensure sustainable results;
- Risk assessment and measures to mitigate them; and
- Realistic budgets and timelines.

178. The evaluation team thought that the designs of many of the tsunami response projects were quite strong, as well as the designs of some recent projects, such as GCP/SRL/061/EC, which featured FAO transitioning to more development-oriented

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<sup>39</sup> For example, the document contains no analysis of the problem of marketing and trade, the effects of climate change or how FAO might support mitigation/adaptation measures. The draft document pays little attention to the distribution of poverty and food insecurity in the country and contains no gender analysis and little focused attention to disaster risk reduction.

<sup>40</sup> The document does, however, identify a number of public and joint public-private company partnerships.

programming. Some of FAO's more relevant regional and global projects were reasonably well designed. However, the evaluation team found persistent flaws in the designs of many of FAO's country projects and TCPs, particularly during the period 2007-2011. Among them were the following:

- Absence of beneficiary participation in identifying needs and designing appropriate responses;
- Limited stakeholder analysis;
- A tendency to be output- and target-driven rather than results-driven;
- Inflexibility – little scope for changing, adapting and innovating at field level once central authorities had set targets and determined packages of assistance;
- Little experimentation with alternative modalities, such as cash transfers, in recovery projects;
- Insufficient risk assessments (e.g. What if there is surplus production?) and mitigation measures (e.g. market development, post-harvest storage and value addition);
- No gender analysis and no budget to work on gender equality;
- Little social analysis or social mobilization;
- Inadequate analysis of the capacities of implementing partners;
- Little analysis of FAO's comparative advantages or use of its normative products (e.g. *Emergencies Handbook*, *Socio-economic and Gender Analysis (SEAGA)*, *Seeds in Emergencies*, *FAO's role and effectiveness in emergencies*, *Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries*, and so on);
- Weak criteria for selecting beneficiaries and project sites;
- Weak understanding and application of RBM;
- Insufficient attention to monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and inadequate budgets for these tasks;
- Insufficient attention to sustainability, including resilient livelihoods, disaster risk reduction, ongoing operation and maintenance of equipment/supplies, marketing of products/goods, and shared responsibility and accountability for results;
- No redress mechanisms for beneficiaries; and
- Little application of lessons from similar programming over the years.

179. The evaluation team was perplexed as to why the country programme had made so little use of FAO's own normative products to inform the design of its projects. For example, the design of many post-conflict recovery and rehabilitation projects would have greatly benefited from reference to many of the publications noted above, and from LEGS.

#### 4.6.3 Gender equality and gender mainstreaming

180. The evaluation team finds the country programme's performance in relation to gender equality and gender mainstreaming extremely weak and devoid of accountability.

181. FAO has long recognized that gender equality and gender mainstreaming are vital to all aspects of its programming, including its normative work.<sup>41</sup> FAO has promoted the

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<sup>41</sup> FAO defines gender equality as "a state in which women and men enjoy equal rights, opportunities and entitlements in civil and political life" (FAO, 2009b, p. 8). The Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) defines gender mainstreaming as "the process of assessing the implications for women and

empowerment of rural women as a means to greater equality for more than half a century. A series of Gender and Development Plans of Action have guided the Organization's work since 1990. Over the past two decades the UN General Assembly passed numerous resolutions calling on all UN organizations to integrate gender equality in their programming. In October 2006, the UN Chief Executives Board for Coordination adopted the UN System-wide policy on gender equality, which required UN organizations "to pursue the goals of gender equality and the empowerment of women... through the coherent and coordinated implementation of gender mainstreaming" (UN Chief Executives Board for Coordination, 2006, Chapter 4, p. 2). In 2009, FAO member states created Strategic Objective K, which called for gender equity in access to resources, goods, services and decision making in rural areas. As noted in Section 3.3 of this report, women's empowerment for equality in political, economic and social life was one of the four pillars of Sri Lanka's 2008-2012 UNDAF.<sup>42</sup>

182. Despite these good intentions, the evaluation team found little evidence of any serious implementation on the part of FAO in Sri Lanka, other than a little more attention in recent years to gathering sex-disaggregated data and a few examples of gender analysis in some of the Organization's more recent project designs. Rather than leading in this important area, FAO lags well behind, as noted in the 2011 gender audit of FAO and the 2011 evaluation of FAO's role and work in relation to gender and development (FAO, 2011c; FAO, 2011d). Not only has FAO's performance been weak, it has missed many opportunities to advance gender equality in Sri Lanka over the period under review, owing in part to pervasive gender blindness amongst the staff – as perceived by some members the evaluation team.

183. The evaluation team found ample evidence to support these findings. The gender specialist on the evaluation team determined that all but a few of the more than 60 country projects reviewed ought to have featured gender mainstreaming and dealt with important gender dimensions. However, only 15 had some elements of gender mainstreaming in their design, and only one (OSRO/SRL/603/EC) had gender mainstreamed throughout. Where gender equality was featured in the project designs and in key strategy documents such as FAO's *Recovery and Rehabilitation Programme for the Agricultural Sector in Conflict-affected Areas of Northern Sri Lanka* (2009b), in the actual implementation not a single project had the combined features of good gender equality practice, such as a budget for gender-related activities, rigorous gender analysis, a gender equality strategy, input from gender specialists and sound monitoring and reporting system to track gender-related outcomes. Many of the post-conflict relief and rehabilitation projects in the north and east identified women as among the most disadvantaged and featured women-specific, targeted interventions. But as discussed earlier in this report, targeting beneficiaries was far from ideal. Many of the women in need who received poultry inputs were further jeopardized when the baby chicks died. By and large, FAO failed to identify women's differential needs

men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality" (ECOSOC, 1997).

<sup>42</sup> The 2008-2010 UNDAF and the Common Country Assessment (CCA) on which it was based thoroughly documented the need for the UNCT to give gender equality a high priority in Sri Lanka, citing many inequities.

in its project designs and women's voices were often not represented in project-related decision making.<sup>43</sup>

184. None of the regional and global projects had Strategic Objective K, *Gender equity in access to resources, goods, services and decision making in rural areas*, among its objectives and only one, Regional Fisheries Livelihoods Programme (GCP RAS 237 SPA), gave gender equality significant attention. Four CIDA-funded projects with a total value of over \$10 million – all obliged to emphasize gender equality according to Canadian funding policy – failed to meet minimal standards despite commitments to do otherwise in most project proposals.<sup>44</sup>

185. In their review of project documents and interviews with FAO staff in Sri Lanka, the evaluators found no references to the use of FAO's normative products on gender equality and gender mainstreaming, such as *Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis (SEAGA) for Emergency and Rehabilitation Programmes* (2006), *Emergency and Rehabilitation Programme: does gender matter?* (2004), and *Gender and Law, Women's Rights in Agriculture* (2002). The evaluators found no such documents in the library in FAO's country office in Colombo. Only one staff member interviewed in that office was aware of FAO's Policy on Gender Equality (2012)<sup>45</sup>.

186. The evaluation team found few signs of leadership commitment to gender equality in the FAO office in Sri Lanka and insufficient support from HQ and RAP. For instance, the FAOR's annual reports during the period under review made no mention of gender equality, gender mainstreaming, social inclusion or of any policy advocacy work to reinforce the GoSL's commitments to UN conventions pertinent to these principles. Staff told the evaluators that gender equality was generally given lip-service attention and was rarely if ever high on the agenda during internal programming discussions. The evaluators note that the country office had made little effort to tap gender expertise readily available within the country and no "strong partnerships and alliances" (a FAO Core Function) had been made with government or NGOs in pursuit of gender equality during the period under review.

187. With no gender specialist on staff at either the Sri Lanka office or at RAP for most of the 2006- 2012 period, with over-stretched specialists at HQ, and with no concerted professional development on the gender dimensions of FAO's work in Sri Lanka in more than 10 years, it is not surprising to see serious neglect in this important cross-cutting area of FAO's mandate.

188. The absence of equity measures in FAO's staffing of the country programme is particularly reprehensible. At the time of the evaluation mission, there were no women in positions of authority among the field staff and only two of the 10 Colombo staff in

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<sup>43</sup> For example, where farmers' organizations participated in FAO's projects in Eastern Province, the evaluation team learned through their interviews that women were usually not well represented.

<sup>44</sup> For example, GCP/SRL/054/CAN reports contained no sex-disaggregated data; OSRO/SRL/104/CAN had no gender-related outcomes or outputs in its logic model and relatively few gender sensitive indicators; and the OED evaluation of GCP/SRL/O57/CAN, reported no gender analysis and weak participation of women from the DFAR (FAO, 2011d).

<sup>45</sup> [http://typo3.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/gender/docs/FAO\\_FinalGender\\_Policy\\_2012.pdf](http://typo3.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/gender/docs/FAO_FinalGender_Policy_2012.pdf)



management and administrative positions were held by women. Women were, for the most part, clustered in low-paying clerical jobs. In the evaluators' debriefing session at the end of their mission, staff said that it was difficult to find qualified women for field positions. Granted, recruiting women for field positions is challenging, but the GoSL appears to have made much more progress than FAO in this regard. Many of the GoSL programming staff who the evaluation team interviewed in the Northern and Eastern provinces were women, including several senior managers.

189. FAO's lackluster performance on equity and gender mainstreaming in Sri Lanka is, in part, a function of inadequate accountability measures throughout the Organization (FAO, 2011c). FAO had no system of accountability for gender equality and gender mainstreaming until a change in corporate policy in early 2012. In the period under review, there were no sanctions to discourage poor performance and no incentives to encourage good performance. Now that an accountability framework is taking shape, there is a herculean task ahead to change FAO's corporate culture and bring it in line with international norms and standards befitting of an organization reputed to be the world leader in agriculture.

#### 4.6.4 Capacity development

190. The evaluation team finds some noteworthy successes among the country programme's work on capacity development, a core function of FAO, but much of what FAO did under the rubric of capacity development brought about little sustainable organizational and institutional change, owing in part to an over-reliance on short-term training and technical assistance.

191. Capacity development has been at the heart of FAO's mandate since its inception. FAO's understanding of capacity development has evolved in recent years as the development community has sought to better understand what capacity is and how it is developed and measured. Whereas FAO and others used to think of capacity development as transferring technical knowledge, skills and models from North to South, largely through training and technical assistance, they now understand it to be far more complex. Successful capacity development is an endogenous process often requiring a comprehensive approach and employing a variety of interventions over time, such as mentoring, coaching, organizational change and systems strengthening. Past approaches to capacity development focused largely on strengthening the capabilities of individuals, but now it is understood to require interventions at organizational, institutional/policy levels with particular attention to the enabling environment, because individual behaviour is shaped by the formal and informal systems, norms and values of organizations and institutions, as reflected in FAO's *Capacity Development Strategy* (2011e) and an accompanying organization-wide action plan approved in 2011.

192. Although few staff in the either country office or RAP were aware of FAO's *Capacity Development Strategy* at the time of the evaluation missions, the evaluators found some effective capacity development work, particularly in FAO's regional and global projects. Two of these, GCP/RAS/170/JPN and TCP/RAS/3206, aimed at developing the institutional capacity of participating governments; six involved strengthening national government policies; and the majority featured capacity development initiatives that went beyond training of individuals. The Pro-poor Policy Formulation, Dialogue and Implementation at the Country Level Project (GCP /RAS/214/IFA) and the complementary

TCP/RAS/3306 featured knowledge generation, networking and South-South exchanges. FAO's TCP on agricultural statistics also had important capacity development benefits.

193. An example of FAO's capacity development worthy of up-scaling is the Regional Programme for Participatory and Integrated Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Development for Long-term Rehabilitation and Development in Tsunami-affected Areas (GCP/RAS/218/JPN) in Vinayagapuram (pop. 7,000). According to an evaluation report, the project succeeded in developing a fully integrated approach to agriculture, forestry and fisheries development through the participation of numerous government line departments, institutions and local farmer's groups, including women farmers (FAO, 2012b). Farmers interviewed for the evaluation claimed that the project's training, demonstration initiatives and local and foreign farmer-to-farmer study visits "enabled them not only to produce better but also serve as 'model farmers' and information focal points for other farmers wishing to expand their income generating activities to other technical areas" (FAO, 2012b, p. 15).

194. FAO effectively utilized regional TCPs and OSRO/602/USA to strengthen early warning and early response capacity for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI). FAO supplied needed laboratory equipment and trained DAPH staff on necropsy procedures, the collection and dispatch of samples, and the production of education, communication and information materials. It supported DAPH staff to conduct awareness trainings and to study poultry production and marketing systems and it funded two study tours to Vietnam. Evidence of DAPH's strengthened capacity was demonstrated in January 2012 when DAPH detected and correctly diagnosed an outbreak of avian influenza. FAO's regional Emergency Centre for Transboundary Animal Diseases (ECTAD) in Bangkok informally used its Good Emergency Management Practices to assess Sri Lanka with positive results. Sri Lanka continues to provide good quality disease reporting and DAPH's 'Epidemiological Bulletin' has been of a consistently high standard. With the support of FAO, DAPH produced a national Avian Influenza Response Plan and received more than \$1.4 million from the WB for HPAI preparedness and response between 2007 and 2011. These positive changes cannot be attributed to FAO alone, but the evidence suggests that it played a significant role.

195. Some capacity development initiatives have been only partially successful. A recent impact evaluation of FAO's support to the implementation of the CCRF in Sri Lanka found "clear evidence that FAO's activities assisted the GoSL to put in place policies and regulations in line with the Code of Conduct" (FAO, 2012a, p. 14). However, that evaluation also found that FAO appeared to have little influence on the government's capacity to implement the Code, which underscores the need to look at capacity development more holistically.

196. This assessment speaks to some general concerns on the part of the evaluators about FAO's capacity development performance in Sri Lanka. The evaluators found FAO to be overly-reliant on short-term training and short-run technical assistance to bring about sustainable change at an organizational level. Twenty-three percent of all country-dedicated projects were less than one year in length; half were one year and only two ran for five years or longer. Research, such as that conducted by the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM), suggests that serious capacity development work can take 10 years or more (Morgan and Baser, 2008). FAO's own capacity development strategy calls for FAO to become "a facilitator of change over extended time horizons" (FAO, 2011d, p. 2).

197. FAO supported the training of thousands of individuals in Sri Lanka during the period under review, but most project documents showed little evidence of organizational or institutional change and little attention to how formal and informal organizational systems and gender dimensions influence the ability of those trained to practice new skills and apply new knowledge. Interviews with staff pointed to the same problem. Some staff acknowledged that, until recently, FAO rarely followed up to determine whether knowledge and skills once developed were applied in the workplace. Although most projects were of an emergency nature, all functioning within a challenging operating environment not conducive to rational planning, the evaluation team believes that FAO could have done more to ensure sufficient time and resources for follow up and follow through.

198. With a few exceptions, such as FAO's institutional analysis and capacity assessment of the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (Banks *et al.*, 2007), the Organization failed to conduct adequate organizational capacity assessments, including analyses of gender gaps, for much of its work with GoSL under the rubric of capacity development. Although there appears to be some improvement in recent projects, the country office has considerable distance to go before it plays "a catalytic role in partnership with national, sub-regional and international actors by delivering high-quality CD [capacity development] support grounded in national, regional and global plans and strategies" as called for in FAO's corporate *Capacity Development Strategy* (FAO, 2011d, p. 2).<sup>46</sup>

#### 4.6.5 Humanitarian assistance principles and codes of conduct

199. Although FAO is obligated to maintain recognized principles and a code of conduct in the delivery of humanitarian assistance, the evaluation team considers that a number of factors limited the country programme's ability to adhere to them strictly. The factors include the difficult context for the delivery of assistance immediately following conflict in the north and east, the limitations of FAO's partnerships with the GoSL and FAO's uneven capacity in this area.

200. All humanitarian responses are obliged to adhere to core humanitarian principles as defined in the UN General Assembly Resolution 46/182. FAO recognizes the humanitarian principles and codes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent societies as well as the Humanitarian Charter on Disaster Response, both of which are featured in FAO's *Emergencies Handbook* (FAO, 2007). The Red Cross code of conduct and humanitarian principles appear in Box 1.

201. These principles and code of conduct have two primary functions. First, they serve as the distilled wisdom of several decades of humanitarian interventions about how best to respond for maximum effectiveness. Second, they help to ensure that people are at the center of the response and that their rights are respected, particularly in situations where the affected people are powerless and beset with multiple vulnerabilities. In complex environments these principles guide humanitarian workers and function as a tool in negotiations with authorities (FAO, 2007). As suggested in FAO's *Emergencies Handbook*, the evaluation team believes that the quality of FAO's relief and rehabilitation programming depends on the degree to

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<sup>46</sup> One project (SPFM/SRL/6601) that perhaps best reflects the new strategy was weak in fostering national ownership, according to a back-to-office report in 2009.

which these principles are instilled in the organizational culture and systems of FAO and its implementing partners.

**Box 2: Red Cross/Red Crescent Code of Conduct and Principles for Humanitarian Responses**

**Code of Conduct**

1. The humanitarian imperative comes first.
2. Aid is given regardless of the race, creed or nationality of the recipients and without adverse distinction of any kind. Aid priorities are calculated on the basis of need alone.
3. Aid will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint.
4. We shall endeavour not to act as instruments of government foreign policy.
5. We shall respect culture and custom.
6. We shall attempt to build disaster response on local capacities.
7. Ways shall be found to involve programme beneficiaries in the management of relief aid.
8. Relief aid must strive to reduce future vulnerabilities to disasters as well as meeting basic needs.
9. We hold ourselves accountable to both those we seek to assist and those from whom we accept resources.
10. In our information, publicity and advertising activities, we shall recognize disaster victims as dignified human beings, not hopeless objects.

*The key principles*

1. Humanity/humanitarian imperative (save lives, alleviate suffering, ensure dignity of the individual).
2. Impartiality (non-discrimination and justice and proportional to need).
3. Independence (increases the probability that impartiality will be upheld).

202. In making its assessment, the evaluation team was mindful of the extenuating circumstances under which FAO's programmes were implemented, particularly during the post-conflict period when it had restricted access to the affected population. The GoSL's PTF, established May 2009, was mandated to plan, direct and monitor the resettlement process. All humanitarian actors were required to respond within the framework strictly regulated by the PTF and liaise via the government-led fora in Colombo and at district levels. Government coordination mechanisms were responsible for assigning locations for agencies to work in and for beneficiary selection. Provisions for donor organizations to conduct their own needs assessments were limited at the beginning, although this situation improved from 2010 onwards, according to many who the evaluation team interviewed.

203. One of FAO's strengths in its response to Sri Lanka's natural disasters and conflict was that it focused on the humanitarian imperative (Key principle #1) of getting assistance to as many people as quickly as possible. This aspect appears to have been FAO's first priority and as stated in the sections of this report dealing with effectiveness and impact, the Organization performed well in this regard.

204. Where FAO could have been stronger was in relation to the third, seventh, eighth and ninth code of conduct. Regarding the point that "aid will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint," the evaluation team found credible evidence that some FAO-supplied materials had been used to entice voters in some districts the team visited. Although this irregularity did not appear to be widespread, it was, nonetheless, disturbing and perhaps could have been prevented or curtailed with better oversight.

205. With regard to the seventh item in the code of conduct stipulating that “ways shall be found to involve programme beneficiaries in the management of relief aid,” the country programme’s performance was mixed. Most project proposals targeting conflict-related beneficiaries reflected little community participation, likely because of the time limitations in preparing them, limited access to the beneficiaries themselves, and because FAO had too little room to manoeuvre within the regulations and approval process set by the PTF. Generally, downward accountability was lacking in most of FAO’s relief and rehabilitation projects involving IDPs. Complaints from target groups, at several water tank rehabilitation sites were left unattended for example.

206. For many of the same reasons noted above, FAO was constrained from following to the letter the eighth point in the code of conduct, namely to “strive to reduce future vulnerabilities to disasters,” as described in Section 4.5.

207. Regarding FAO’s accountability to those who are assisted, the evaluation team thought FAO was more successful in its post-tsunami relief and rehabilitation efforts, where there was greater space for beneficiary participation, than it was in its post-conflict response, where the military restricted the involvement of community-based organizations. It appears that FAO did little to question the GoSL’s decisions about who would receive assistance, what that assistance would be and when, where and how it would be delivered.

208. From reading FAO project proposals and reports, it is unclear the extent to which FAO incorporated humanitarian principles and codes of conduct in designing, implementing and monitoring its relief and rehabilitation projects. It was, however, evident to the evaluation team that FAO did not use a rights-based approach, even though the merits of this approach are well known throughout the UN system.

209. Why then were most of FAO’s post-conflict relief and rehabilitation projects reduced largely to an input-transfer model of programming? Although the actions and circumstances surrounding FAO’s government implementing partners provide part of the answer, FAO’s own limitations were a significant factor. Field staff questioned on this issue told the evaluation team that they had received no formal training from FAO in relation to codes of conduct and humanitarian principles, and that the Colombo office had not emphasized their importance. Humanitarian principles and codes of conduct did not appear to be included systematically when orienting new field staff. The evaluation team found no evidence of FAO efforts to hold its government partners to them.

## ***4.7 Management and Operational Issues***

### ***4.7.1 Mobilization and management of resources***

210. The evaluation finds FAO’s Sri Lanka programme successful at raising substantial funding for projects and at establishing good relationships with resource partners. FAO’s performance in managing its human and financial resources was, however, uneven with, for example, many staff on short-term contracts and inadequate procurement processes.

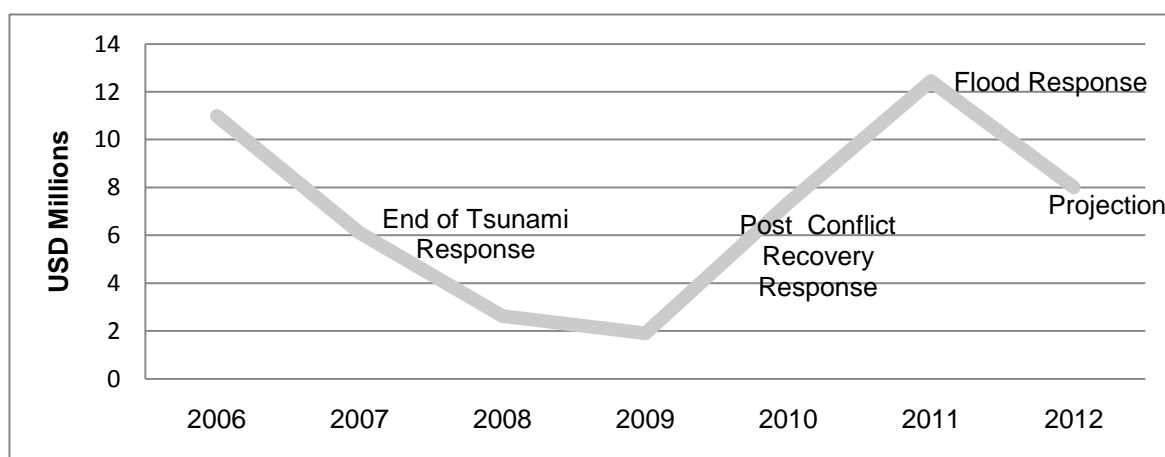
211. One of FAO’s major strengths over the past six years has been its success in raising more than \$75 million USD from a wide variety of sources for more than 60 emergency, recovery and development projects in Sri Lanka. The FAOR told the evaluators that he allocated 15-20 percent of his time to resource mobilization, time which appears to have been

spent productively. Not only was the FAOR successful in raising a substantial amount of money, but he also established excellent relations within the donor community through networking, frequent communication and participation in work-related and social events. His efforts helped raise FAO's profile within Sri Lanka and its reputation as an agency capable of delivering effective relief and rehabilitation projects in a timely and efficient manner. FAO's resource partners were consistent in pointing this out to members of the evaluation team during their mission.

212. The evaluation team found that the Sri Lanka country office also made good use of TCP resources during the period under review. It directed almost \$3 million over the past three biennia to a variety of programme initiatives across a number of agriculture sub-sectors.

213. The evaluation mission noted that external resources from traditional overseas development assistance (ODA) sources are declining (see Figure 8), and with Sri Lanka emerging as a middle-income country, this trend is likely to continue. With increasing responsibility for resource mobilization at the country level, it would be helpful if FAO HQ were to guide the FAOR on how to access global funds.

**Figure 8. Budget Expenditure FAO Sri Lanka, 2006-2012**



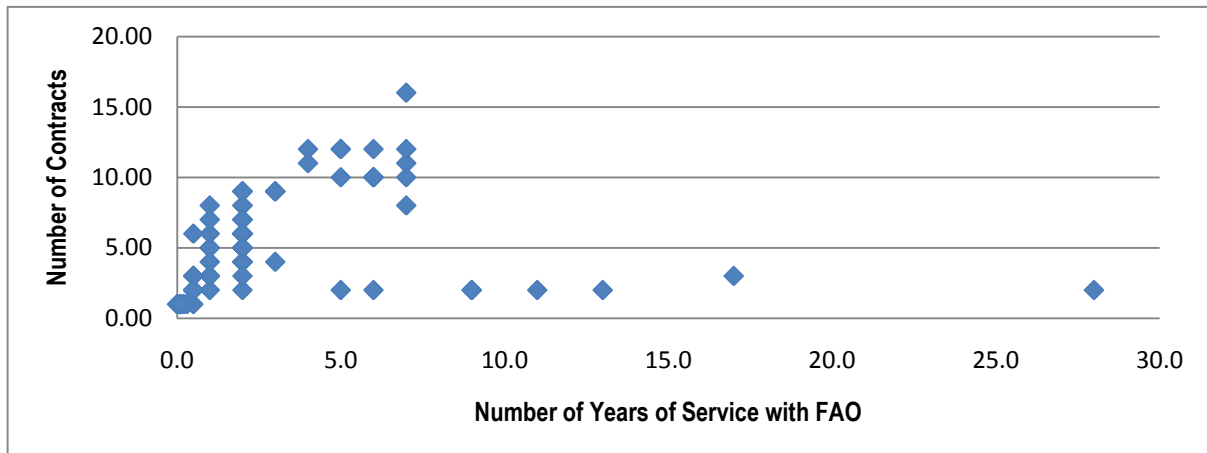
Source: FAO, FPMIS June 2012

214. Despite a challenging management environment, the country office saw improvements in several aspects of its human resource management in recent years. Staff told the evaluators that the FAOR took charge of staff recruitment and structuring from the outset of his tenure, making numerous positive changes, including the physical and programmatic integration of the emergency unit with FAO's regular programme. The FAOR introduced regular staff meetings, annual retreats and systems for soliciting complaints, all of which helped to improve staff morale, according to many staff members who the evaluation team interviewed. Staff also complimented the FAOR for his team building efforts.

215. One of the country programme's greatest challenges was to secure adequate human resources to ensure strong performance across its many and varied projects. The need for a variety of skill sets within a large number of short-term projects resulted in significant turnover of short-term staff contracts as illustrated in Figure 9. The average FAO staff member has worked for the Sri Lanka programme for three years and has had five contracts over this period. A number of staff raised this issue with the evaluation team, noting that it was a source of considerable frustration, morale loss and, in some cases, weak programming. Although FAO likely saved money in the short run, such short-term employment

arrangements are inequitable in that they provide minimal benefits and few opportunities for professional development or advancement. This issue speaks to larger recruitment and retention problems that other country and regional offices have experienced. Resolving them is beyond the control of the country programme and will require the attention of those involved in FAO reform in Rome.<sup>47</sup>

**Figure 9. Years of Service and Number of Contracts, FAO Sri Lanka Staff (N=93), 2012**



Source: Staff list and salaries database. FAO Sri Lanka. May 2012.

216. Staff interviewed in Colombo and in the field told the evaluation team that they were overworked and had little time to monitor projects and provide technical advice. Some field staff said that DoA staff sometimes provided needed technical backstopping, which is ideal as long as that backstopping is of a high technical standard. The evaluation team recognizes that resource partners put significant pressure on FAO to maximize the support going to households and to minimize overhead costs during relief operations. Nevertheless, FAO needs to make a convincing case for the provision of technical assistance in order to maintain international standards and to enhance the capacity of local organizations and line departments when critical capacity gaps are apparent.

217. The evaluation team believes that there is merit to the claim that some staff are overworked. Compared to other FAO programmes of similar size, the Sri Lanka country office is short on experienced operations and programming staff and consultants. Other countries with large relief and recovery programmes often have a senior programme coordinator, senior operations officer, senior finance and administration/logistics officer, cluster coordinator and a procurement officer over and above the regular staff of the FAO Representation. Ideally, the staffing composition and structure should be reflected in the CPF and linked to the CPF's vision and desired outcomes.

218. Several other UN agencies in Sri Lanka told the evaluation team that they were restructuring to shift programmatically to upstream policy work, in keeping with the draft UNDAF for 2013-2017. For some, this meant laying off some staff and hiring others in order to have the right skill sets for long-term organizational capacity development, including policy research with leading Sri Lankan institutions. The evaluation team saw no similar

<sup>47</sup> FAO Zimbabwe and FAO Somalia have found ways to mitigate such problems: both cost-share posts across grants allowing for more programmatic approaches including longer contracts for staff.

restructuring occurring in FAO's Sri Lanka office. Instead, the office appeared to be seeking new project funding as a way to retain the same staff, many of whom were grounded in emergency relief. The evaluation team saw no evidence of a professional development plan to prepare staff for possible new roles in relation to long-term development, including policy and research work. The evaluators acknowledge that the Sri Lanka office hired a new team to work on a 5-year development project funded by the EU.

219. The management of consultants appeared to be an area with room for improvement. Staff in Colombo told the evaluation team that the database of consultants was updated irregularly, and some important resources such as gender specialists were noticeably absent. The systematic assessment and recording of each consultant's performance was uneven. (The evaluation team heard precisely the same story when they questioned RAP about its consultants.) Most staff interviewed on this issue in Colombo and at RAP agreed that the remuneration rates for local and international consultants were too low and that some of the best qualified consultants were now unwilling to work for FAO. One staff member in Colombo told the evaluators that the office tended to re-use the same low-cost consultants from year to year.

220. Although fluctuations in the quality of work carried out by consultants is normal, the evaluation team heard frequent complaints from partner organizations and beneficiaries regarding, for example, consultants' purchase of sub-standard pumps and diseased baby chicks and their shoddy work on some water tanks. Although such complaints need to be placed in context, the evaluation team found direct evidence of their own, such as the deficient quality of the draft CPF, as noted in Section 4.6.1.

221. The evaluation team noted shortcomings at the country office with regard to oversight and controls. For example, the team found irregularities in the distribution of some of FAO's agricultural inputs such as water pumps and concluded that more systematic spot checking and more advanced security systems for safeguarding valuable materials might have either prevented them from occurring or at the very least allowed FAO to deal with them more expeditiously. The team notes that country staff need to be made aware of their obligation to report irregularities and that FAO's policy in this respect made clear to its partners and staff alike.

222. An independent audit of FAO Sri Lanka completed in October 2011 pointed to weaknesses in procurement and in monitoring FAO's agreements with its implementing partners. HQ sent three procurement missions in recent years and provided regional training on new procurement and contracting procedures in order to strengthen the country programme's capacity. Although the evaluation mission found that the country office had made progress in rectifying several areas of deficiency, it lacked administration staff and the time needed to overcome them all. For example, at the time of the evaluation mission, no procurement plan was in place and administrative job descriptions under the new organogram had not been revised, potentially leading to confusion over roles and responsibilities.

223. The evaluation team found the country office's budget monitoring system insufficient for identifying implementation problems and dealing with them expeditiously.

224. In 2013, FAO will roll out a new Global Resource Management System (GRMS). This offers significant potential for improving FAO administrative and operational capacity



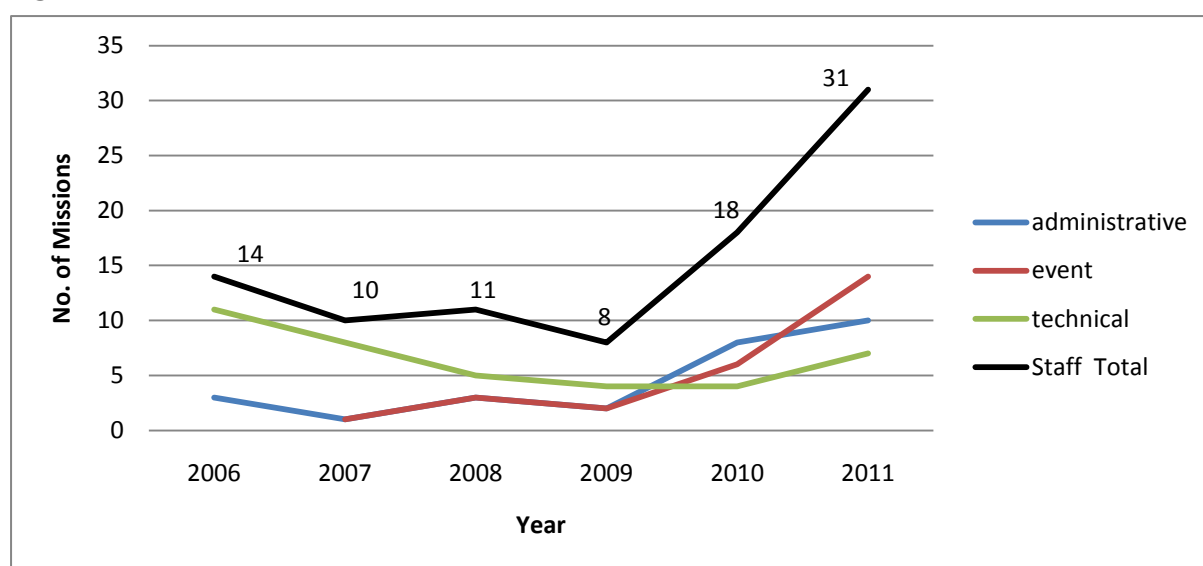
with respect to procurement, national human resource management, asset management, vendor payments, and budget management. Setting up this new system will involve considerable additional work for the country office’s administrative staff and a good deal of training to familiarize them with new systems and procedures. The evaluation mission is, however, concerned that FAO Sri Lanka may not have sufficient capacity to effectively adopt GRMS.<sup>48</sup>

#### 4.7.2 Support from FAO headquarters and regional office

225. The evaluation mission considers backstopping from headquarters and FAO’s regional office, particularly with respect to technical support, uneven and not to have increased commensurately with FAO’s reform programme or with FAO Sri Lanka’s programming growth and its post-conflict transition.

226. The graphs below (Figures 10 and 11), which use technical missions as a proxy for support, suggest that support from FAO’s global and regional offices have not kept pace with the country programme’s needs. FAO’s Field Programme Management Information System (FPMIS) similarly suggest insufficient backstopping insofar as only 16 of 62 country projects have a specific lead technical officer assigned to support the project from either RAP or HQ.

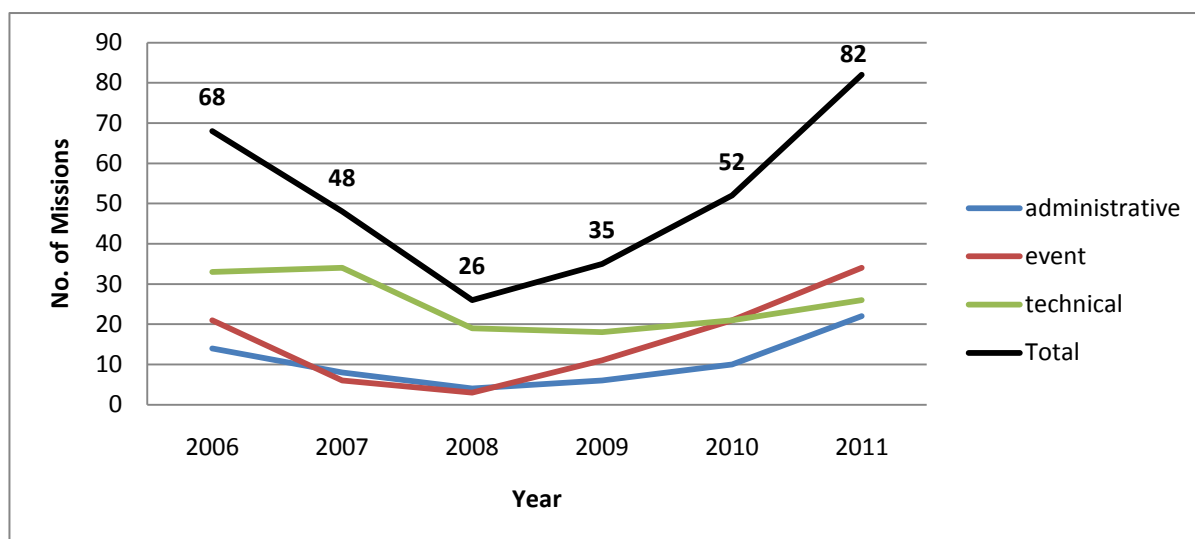
**Figure 10. Missions to Sri Lanka from RAP staff, 2006-2011**



Source: FAO/Country Office Information Network, 2012.

<sup>48</sup> For instance, the Assistant FAOR Administration in Sri Lanka was unable to volunteer for the GRMS training of trainers programme because of insufficient capacity at country office in his absence.

Figure 11. Missions to Sri Lanka from FAO HQ, 2006-2011



Source: FAO/Country Office Information Network, 2012.

227. Most of the management and administrative staff at RAP told the evaluators that they were overstretched before decentralization and likely to be even more thinly spread with it. Although negotiations on decentralization suggest that the capacity of regional operations will soon increase with the establishment of new posts at RAP, HQ appears to have given insufficient consideration to the increased needs of country programmes for technical backstopping. Several key posts are vacant in the RAP multi-disciplinary team, all of which are important to the Sri Lanka programme.<sup>49</sup> The newly created food security officer post planned for RAP is, however, a positive step, given FAO Sri Lanka's needs and the chronic and recurrent food insecurity in the region.

228. Staff in the Colombo office told the evaluation team that although some had received good technical support from RAP in the past, particularly in the fisheries sub-sector, what they needed most was a specialist in M&E with a strong RBM background. There is, however, no M&E or RBM specialist in RAP.

229. Some of FAO's field staff interviewed by the evaluation team said they received more technical support from GoSL line departments than from either RAP or HQ. For example, the FAO staff hired locally to supervise the rehabilitation of water tanks during the post-conflict period had little experience of this nature and turned to the Agrarian Development Department for technical assistance, which they received. According to TCE, there were times when the country office turned down offers of technical support from HQ. Technical support from local sources is commendable, but ideally country programmes ought to strike a balance between local and external assistance. In many cases local technical support is sufficient and more affordable, but in some cases the country programme could benefit from the global experience and advanced expertise at FAO HQ and RAP.

230. In the livestock sub-sector the evaluation team found excellent links between the HPAI work carried out and the ECTAD regional programme managed from RAP. However,

<sup>49</sup> Six P4/5 vacancies: gender, agribusiness officer, food systems economist, forest, climate change, and water resources, plus one P4 staff on long-term sick leave.

apart from one short visit by RAP technical staff, support for the post-conflict rehabilitation and recovery work was confined to technical commentary on proposals.

231. The evaluation mission notes that the WB was highly appreciative of the support it has received from FAO's Investment Centre (TCI) for large-scale national investments in Sri Lanka. That support has focused largely on programme design and monitoring.

232. One of the key roles of FAO global and regional technical experts is to bring global good practice and knowledge to the country level. With the exception of statistics and land tenure, the evaluation mission noted little evidence of HQ and RAP's normative work at country level. Some stakeholders interviewed indicated that they had sought FAO normative work on their own initiative via the Internet.

#### 4.7.3 Decentralization

233. The evaluation team commends the Sri Lanka country office for taking the initiative to merge emergency operations with FAO's regular programme. Although largely successful, FAO was slow in providing systems support and management authority for staffing, both of which are important elements for successful decentralization.

234. FAO as a UN technical agency has tended to be highly centralized with expertise concentrated in Rome and decision-making largely within units there. At the regional level, FAO functioned until recently largely as an administrative centre. At country level, FAO Representations have tended to be small, with annual budgets from regular programme sources typically at about \$200,000 and core staff numbering less than 10. Past FAO Directors General have appointed FAORs on the basis of their ability to liaise with governments on behalf of the Organization rather than for their programme management and planning skills.

235. Since the Independent External Evaluation of FAO (2007), the Organization has taken steps to decentralize, including the following:

- Changing reporting lines of the FAORs from the Director General to Regional Representatives;
- Establishing multi-disciplinary teams in the regions as the first "port of call" for technical assistance;
- Increasing FAORs' delegated authority to sign donor agreements and authorize expenditure for projects under their authority;
- Allowing country offices to access human resource, finance and administrative processes; and
- Updated procedures regarding the selection, performance and succession of FAO Representatives.

236. Emergency operations have, however, remained largely centralized in Rome, which until recently maintained responsibility for most related management functions. The reasons for this central control were the need to provide surge capacity through global rosters and redeployment from other FAO emergency projects, procure on a large-scale beyond the authority of the FAOR, and mobilize funding in donor country capitals. As well, many FAO representatives lacked experience implementing large-scale emergency responses and most FAO offices had insufficient capacity to scale up operations quickly during and after crises.

237. In 2009, a FAO evaluation recommended greater TCE decentralization, including the out-posting of operations officers and the recruitment of FAORs with emergency operations experience. However, it was not until 2012 that the formal transfer of responsibilities from TCE to FAORs began.

238. FAO selected Sri Lanka as a pilot country for decentralization of emergency operations in 2012, in part because the FAORs had been encouraging decentralization and programmatic integration since 2007. With a great deal of effort on his part, the FAOR for Sri Lanka successfully completed the merging of the emergency and recovery coordination unit with the FAO Representation and brought both under his management. Although this meant significantly more work, it was thought to be feasible in 2008-2009, given the relatively small project portfolio at the time. However, the recovery programme grew exponentially in 2010-2011 without a commensurate increase in the levels of staffing, particularly in the administrative areas. As much of the overhead budget for emergency operations remained with HQ until recently, the FAOR had little budgetary flexibility to close the staffing gaps.

#### 4.7.4 Monitoring, evaluation and learning

239. Although improved of late, the evaluation team finds FAO's systems for monitoring, evaluation and learning in need of considerable strengthening.

*"In all of our work, the goal is to do better next time. We emphasize among the staff that we must continually learn and continually improve on what we do. We cannot be static."*

- FAOR, *Annual Report, 2011*, p. 4

240. The evaluation team noted significant improvements over the past year to the country programme's M&E systems. For example, the FAOR recently hired a new M&E specialist to head the M&E unit and secured the assistance of a TCE consultant to improve reporting formats, management information systems and monitoring procedures. In 2011, the Colombo office hired a senior agronomist to conduct an impact assessment of the agriculture recovery programmes in the Northern Province. The FAOR also employed additional M&E staff and data input operators for each field office and stepped up training in M&E.

241. However, FAO staff in Colombo told the evaluation team that M&E systems were largely ineffective during much of the period under review and that many improvements were still needed on top of those described above. The desk reviews supported these assertions. They found, for example, few projects with adequate logic models and performance measurement frameworks, mostly quantitative output data with little qualitative or quantitative information relating to outcomes, inconsistent gathering of sex-disaggregated data, and an absence of monitoring and reporting on unexpected outcomes. Although most project plans committed FAO to M&E, many project budgets had little or no funds earmarked for either. Few project planning and reporting documents contained an analysis of risks and risk mitigation strategies, both of which are standard practice in RBM.

242. Few senior managers appeared to have a basic understanding of RBM, a serious shortcoming that persists to this day, as the draft CPF attests. In this signature document, the writers have mistaken outputs for outcomes, activities for results, and have failed to craft outcome statements and outputs in a consistent manner.

243. Although HQ's TCE provided a M&E consultant beginning in 2010 to strengthen the M&E systems and to train staff involved in a EC-funded project, most staff prior to this had received little M&E training and no solid plans were evident to deal with this shortcoming at the time of the evaluation mission. The M&E staff at the country office told the evaluators that they would welcome M&E guidelines from FAO, adding that they found the FAO website difficult to navigate.

244. Visits to field offices showed unclear lines of communication in the past between the field offices and Colombo with respect to project monitoring. Some staff suggested that this had encouraged filtering of information at times – such that the Colombo office did not always have a complete picture of what was happening in the field.

245. Ideally, project implementing partners ought to play a major role in monitoring. This responsibility was not always clear in the letters of agreement with FAO's project partners. FAO provided few, if any, methodological guidelines for this purpose until recently, according to staff and it missed opportunities to include government partners in its M&E training for FAO staff.

246. Effective M&E practice should also see the involvement of communities. With the exception of the east where FAO partnered with CBOs to survey beneficiaries, the evaluation team saw little evidence of community engagement in monitoring during the post-conflict period. The evaluation team recognizes that the GoSL prohibited the participation of CBOs and NGOs in such activities in the Northern Province during much of the period under review.

247. The FAOR's assertion that 'the goal is to do better next time' in all of FAO's work is commendable. The means to this end is good reflective practice.<sup>50</sup> However, the evaluation team found this area wanting. Staff reported that work planning was often rushed, with insufficient time to reflect on past experience. Those involved in monitoring said that they gathered data largely for compliance purposes, in other words for the purpose of reporting to resource partners, and made little use of the information for learning and management decision making. Planning documents, including the CPF, were often contracted out to consultants to draft with insufficient involvement of staff, especially those on the front lines of programme delivery. Although the present FAOR began regular staff meetings and annual retreats, these did not appear to involve deep reflective practice.

## **5 Lessons**

248. The evaluators have drawn lessons from the country evaluation, some of which come from project documents, but most of which are derived from the evaluators' own reflections during and after the evaluation mission, as well as from examining FAO's performance benchmarked against FAO's own normative products related to good practice.

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<sup>50</sup> 'Reflective practice' (Schön, 1982) refers to a system wherein managers and staff critically examine their progress toward the achievement of results, reflecting on all relevant data and asking such questions as: Are we doing the right things? Are our planning assumptions correct? Are we managing risks and responding appropriately to changes in the programme environment? Have we got the right technical assistance? Are we applying what we've learned about how to be more effective? How can we perform more effectively with existing resources?

249. ***Effective programming requires effective staff and good leadership.*** The quality of programming is most often directly correlated to the quality of the people involved in it. The evaluation has shown that with a competent staff and good management FAO Sri Lanka was able to deliver inputs quickly and efficiently to thousands of small farmers and fishers and to help large parts of the country recover food production following prolonged conflict and natural disasters. This programming could not have been accomplished without effective leadership. The incumbent FAOR was largely responsible for putting FAO ‘on the map’ in Sri Lanka, raising tens of millions of dollars locally and forging excellent relationships with government, UN organizations and a wide range of resource partners. Leadership that is confident in acting quickly and decisively is particularly important during times of crisis and here the Representative demonstrated exceptional talent.

250. ***Vision and strategy are needed to set priorities, focus programming and capitalize on an organization’s comparative advantages.*** The evaluation has shown that even though an organization can shine in emergency situations, without a well-reasoned strategy, it can miss opportunities to take advantage of some of its greatest strengths. Working within a coherent framework is important to ensure impact and sustainable outcomes. For example, had FAO Sri Lanka’s CPF been in place, FAO could have built on the success of projects such as the dairy TCP/3204, been fully engaged with dairy policy development and taken advantage of regional dairy smaller holder development programmes managed by RAP. It is well and good that programming be driven by the host government, but organizations such as FAO must have clear complementary goals that focus on their comparative advantages for maximum effectiveness. At times, this may mean declining government’s requests or holding governments to international standards, both of which are possible where there is sufficient trust, mutual respect and understanding.

251. ***Reaching the most vulnerable requires special measures.*** The evaluation has shown the pitfalls of a one-size-fits-all approach when packaging emergency relief and rehabilitation assistance. Needs analysis that takes into account gender-based roles, local knowledge and local resources is essential, particularly when serving vulnerable groups. NGOs and CBOs that know local customs, cultures and economic conditions can often play a key role. Targeting the most vulnerable is likely to take more time and a different mix of resources. Blanket-coverage is usually a poor alternative and in some cases may do more harm than good.

252. ***Although difficult to achieve, emergency assistance needs to strike a balance between quality and quantity.*** Emergency response is a messy business that does not lend itself well to linear planning, fixed timelines and well-delineated boundaries. That said, organizations involved in emergency relief and rehabilitation need to strike a balance between blanket coverage and targeted assistance directed at the most vulnerable. Programming that is numbers-driven rather than results-driven has a tendency to compromise on quality. For example, livestock projects dealing with restocking are complex and need to be implemented in a methodical, measured way. High targets do not necessarily mean greater efficiency and impact, as the evaluation has shown. Robust monitoring is needed to ensure that the right assistance is reaching those who are most in need. Having many small, short-term projects, each requiring separate proposals, staffing, contracting, monitoring, reporting and administrative arrangements, breeds inefficiency. It can also weaken impact because of the difficulties involved in developing synergies among them. Many small projects may not add up to a coherent programme. Although resource partners bear some of the blame for the

plethora of small projects, organizations such as FAO must take the long view and insist on alternatives, such as pooling resources and collaborating with others to achieve more sustainable outcomes with less effort.

253. ***Short time-frames and an over-reliance on training are usually insufficient for strengthening organizational capacity.*** The Sri Lanka programme's experience suggests that deeper and more sustainable capacity change may occur with longer-term interventions that go beyond training to deal with both the formal and informal systems of rewards and sanctions in organizations.

254. Participatory engagement with beneficiaries, although challenging in some emergency situations, is important for sustainable results and targeted interventions. The evaluation has underscored the need for participatory planning in order to reach vulnerable groups. FAO's own guide for agricultural emergencies goes farther, recommending participatory needs assessment, response formulation, implementation and M&E (FAO, 2011b). Where extenuating circumstances impede participation, as in the immediate post-conflict period in Sri Lanka, organizations delivering assistance must insist on having the flexibility to adjust their programming as the needs of the most vulnerable become apparent. Participatory engagement with vulnerable groups can provide the knowledge needed to make those adjustments.

255. Integrating measures to strengthen resilience, reduce vulnerabilities and overcome gender-based barriers is essential for food and nutrition security over the long term. Ensuring that emergency food security assistance contributes to longer term farm and fishery livelihood development and that it provides a buffer against future shocks is now established good practice. Disaster risk reduction for food and nutrition security is the prudent course of action during emergency response, recovery and rehabilitation. It is particularly important in countries such as Sri Lanka that are prone to natural disasters and other hazards. Convincing resource partners of this necessity remains a challenge.

*"Disaster risk reduction is a necessary ingredient for food and nutrition security, and for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal 1."*

- A. Muller & L. Thomas from the foreword to *Resilient Livelihoods* (FAO, 2012)

256. Good reflective practice, which can help projects adapt to changes in the programming environment, takes time, resources and good communication. FAO's experience in Sri Lanka shows that the kind of deep reflective practice that can lead to constructive changes in a project's design and implementation cannot be combined with other tasks such as staff meetings and project planning events. Deep reflective practice takes time, good facilitation, and the involvement of staff at all levels.

257. Attention to psychosocial disorders in post-conflict situations such as in Sri Lanka is essential for the health of individuals and organizations. This issue, which the Colombo staff raised with the evaluation team, is sensitive and potentially disruptive if it is not dealt with in a professional and expedient manner. A considerable body of literature supports the view that

failing to adequately heal psychosocial disorders in post-conflict situations can render organizations dysfunctional.<sup>51</sup>

## **6 Conclusions and Recommendations**

258. The country evaluation has sought to determine the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of FAO's work in Sri Lanka between 2006 and 2011, a tumultuous period in the country's history, marked by natural disasters and conflict, but also by hope with the end of almost three decades of civil strife. The evaluation team appreciates the exceedingly difficult circumstances that FAO faced during this period and commends the Organization for its many accomplishments, most notably its significant contribution to increased agricultural production following conflict and floods through the timely delivery of emergency assistance.

259. FAO succeeded in raising more than \$75 million from a variety of resource partners, dramatically improving its visibility as a key player in Sri Lanka's response to emergencies. FAO's country office established a close working relationship with the GoSL and excellent relations within the UNCT. FAO supported global and regional projects that brought new technical knowledge to Sri Lanka and that exposed some decision makers to global and regional networks. FAO's technical assistance brought timely, relevant information and expertise that helped resolve urgent problems and that aided Sri Lanka, in a few cases, to prepare for future shocks that could seriously undermine the country's food and nutrition security and its agricultural economy. The evaluation team concludes that FAO's country programme was, by and large, successful in its work over the evaluation period, and greatly appreciated by the GoSL.

260. However, the complex nature of FAO's work, the challenging and unpredictable conditions in Sri Lanka and capacity gaps among FAO's staff and its partners contributed to a number of shortcomings, not the least of which was the programme's lack of a coherent framework with which to focus resources in areas aligned with FAO's global comparative advantages. The evaluation team has documented other concerns, among them: a dearth of participatory practice; questionable sustainability of some initiatives; weak cluster coordination, persistent shortcomings in monitoring and oversight and in project design; and insufficient attention to gender equality, normative work, policy engagement and organizational capacity development.

261. At the outset of this report, the evaluation team signaled its intention to make the evaluation forward-looking. In this regard, what matters most is not the evaluation team's assessment of FAO's past performance, but rather what FAO can learn from its successes and shortcomings – what it needs to change so as to be more effective in the future in adapting to Sri Lanka's evolving context as a middle-income country, changing funding realities and emerging development trends. It is in the spirit of that commitment that the evaluation team makes its recommendations.

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<sup>51</sup> See, for example, Hart, Barry, ed. (2008). *Peacebuilding in Traumatized Societies*. University Press of America; Summerfield, D. "A critique of seven assumptions behind psychological trauma programs in war-affected areas." *Social Science and Medicine* 48 (1999): 1449–1462.; and Young, A. (1995). *The Harmony of Illusions: Inventing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.



**Recommendation 1:** It is recommended that FAO's Sri Lanka country office consult more broadly with FAO staff and partners and develop a coherent, focused CPF that capitalizes on FAO's global and country-level comparative advantages, that is aligned with GoSL's emerging priorities, Sri Lanka's middle-income country status and the new UNDAF, and that advocates pro-poor and sustainable policies.

262. The country office needs to apply more strategic thinking to the CPF and tap the collective wisdom of its own staff, RAP's specialists and a variety of government, NGO and private sector expertise in Sri Lanka. The evaluation team would suggest that the country office undertake a more rigorous analysis of its own strengths and weaknesses and determine its future niche, one that is aligned with the Organization's comparative advantages locally and globally, and that takes stock of external funding trends and Sri Lanka's middle-income country status. Sri Lanka is likely to need more normative, policy and organizational and institutional capacity development support from FAO in the future and less assistance with the delivery of household recovery assistance. Other UN organizations appear to be more advanced on this path, some having begun to restructure and revise their staffing mix to accommodate more pronounced upstream roles such as policy influence and knowledge generation.

263. The country office would do well to revisit the UNDAF and refine its draft CPF not only in relation to FAO's potential contribution to Sri Lanka's economic growth, but also with regard to other pillars of the UNDAF that deal with disparities, disaster risk reduction, human rights, governance and environmental sustainability, for example. The country office also needs to bring the CPF in line with new FAO policies and priorities in relation to gender equality and capacity development, and with HQ's latest thinking on resilient livelihoods for food and nutrition security. On the issue of gender equality, the county office would do well to develop a strategy to integrate gender equality as part of its CPF.<sup>52</sup>

264. Although it would be prudent for FAO to give more emphasis to its policy-advocacy role in the future, it should do this from a solid base of evidence and field experience. This role would likely mean fewer, but more and longer capacity development and policy-oriented projects in the future. Streamlining and strengthening Sri Lanka's myriad of agricultural, fisheries and forestry extension services and increasing the focus on aspects of domestic and international marketing and trade are two of several areas of critical need which caught the attention of the evaluation team, and that are well-aligned with FAO's global and regional priorities. The evaluation team contends that FAO ought to focus its field projects in the Northern and Eastern provinces where development lags behind other parts of the country, where disparities are pronounced and where the GoSL has significant capacity gaps.

**Recommendation 2:** It is recommended that FAO HQ, RAP and FAO Sri Lanka work together to ensure that the country office has the right staff and consultants in place in order to implement the CPF, transition to new administrative management systems and compensate for increased operational responsibilities under decentralization.

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<sup>52</sup> See Guidelines Country Programme Framework – Integrating Gender Issues: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i1913e/i1913e00.pdf>

265. Once the country office has reformulated its CFP, it should align its staffing accordingly, ensuring the right mix of core competencies and access to specialized knowledge and skills as needed to complete recovery initiatives and refocus its country programme. This shift will likely require a different staff configuration, as well as improved access to specialists from Sri Lanka and the region in such fields as RBM, M&E, organizational capacity development, gender equality and some of the technical areas of focus within the CFP. The country office will need to strengthen its administrative capacity as FAO rolls out its GRMS programme. With decentralization, GRMS will bring sweeping changes to the country office's management and administrative architecture, particularly in relation to procurement and financial and human resource management. FAO HQ would do well to assist the country office with a review of its medium- and long-term staffing requirements in light of these changes. The country office may wish to negotiate with HQ for an increased share of project operating costs as it takes on increased responsibility with decentralization.

**Recommendation 3: It is recommended that FAO Sri Lanka continue to strengthen its monitoring and evaluation systems to meet both learning needs and accountability requirements, and that FAO create a position to better support country programmes in the region on matters pertaining to performance enhancement, monitoring and evaluation.**

266. The evaluation team has provided evidence that the country programme would benefit from a more robust M&E system. As this report has noted, the country programme needs to do a better job of incorporating results-based M&E into projects (and project budgets) from the design stage onward. It needs to place much more emphasis on learning by institutionalizing deep reflective practice wherein staff and management analyze monitoring data and other information systematically for continuous programme improvement and enhanced performance. Since this need is likely common to other country programmes in the region, it makes sense for RAP to play a supportive role with an expert who has a strong background in M&E, RBM, adult learning, organizational change and rural development. In considering this recommendation, HQ and RAP may wish to examine the growing body of literature on developmental evaluation, which makes a case for embedding such an advisor throughout the project or programme cycle as a way of stimulating evaluative thinking, developing robust monitoring systems, and strengthening reflective practice so that lessons become 'lessons learned' in a continuous cycle of programming improvement.<sup>53</sup>

**Recommendation 4: It is recommended that FAO Sri Lanka improve the design, implementation and sustainability of its country projects by continuing to expand its choice of partners, incorporating better participatory processes, analyzing and responding to gender-based differential needs, and drawing on FAO's rich repository of normative products and effective practices.**

267. The evaluation has shown the strengths and limitations of partnering mainly with government line departments. The evaluation team believes that it would be prudent for FAO Sri Lanka to continue to expand its partnerships to include more CBOs, NGOs and special

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<sup>53</sup> See for example: Patton, M. (2010). *Developmental Evaluation: Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use*. New York: Guilford Press and Gamble, J. (2008). *A Developmental Evaluation Primer*. Montreal: The J. W. McConnell Family Foundation., accessible at [www.mcconnellfoundation.ca](http://www.mcconnellfoundation.ca).

groups, such as women's organizations, to assist in targeting the vulnerable populations. FAO should also look to private sector organizations if it becomes more involved in marketing and market research, or in developing new crop varieties or livestock breeds, for example. FAO Sri Lanka would also do well to identify one or two promising Sri Lankan organizations or institutions on which to focus its capacity development work over the next decade. The need for improved participatory practices in project design, implementation and M&E are highlighted throughout this report, as well as the requirement for strengthened downward accountability. Partnering with farmers' organizations, fishers' cooperatives and other such organizations would help in this latter regard.

268. FAO Sri Lanka has been negligent with regard to its gender equality and gender mainstreaming obligations, both in its programming and its staffing. Rectifying this shortcoming will require the ongoing attention of the FAOR because it will involve a major shift in organizational culture, individual awareness and collective behavior, as well as changes to some of the country office's management and administrative systems in alignment with FAO's policy on gender equality. The country office must not overlook its obligations to its partner institutions in Sri Lanka, and should, for example, support country institutions in generating and analyzing gender-disaggregated data. FAO Sri Lanka would do well to draw upon every possible resource that FAO can muster for these tasks, including specialists from within the country and the region.

269. Improved awareness and use of FAO's own normative products, including its code of conduct for emergency assistance, capacity development policy, and recent work on resilient livelihoods for food and nutrition security would go a long way to strengthen the designs of FAO's future projects. Creating an inventory of these resources and familiarizing staff with them ought to be among FAO Sri Lanka's highest priorities in the immediate future.

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