

MOPAN ASSESSMENT REPORT

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)



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EXPLANATORY NOTE

MOPAN is the only collective action mechanism that meets member countries' information needs regarding the performance of multilateral organisations. Through its institutional assessment reports, MOPAN provides comprehensive, independent, and credible performance information to inform members' engagement and accountability mechanisms.

MOPAN's assessment reports tell the story of the multilateral organisation and its performance. Through detailing the major findings and conclusions of the assessment, alongside the organisation's performance journeys, strengths, and areas for improvement, the reports support member's decision-making regarding multilateral organisations and the wider multilateral system.

This document is published under the responsibility of the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN). MOPAN is an independent body that is governed by a Steering Committee composed of representatives of its member countries and served by a permanent Secretariat. The Secretariat is hosted at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and bound by its administrative rules and procedures and is independent in terms of financing and the content and implementation of its work programme.

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PREFACE

ABOUT MOPAN

The Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) comprises 22 members* that promote an effective multilateral system, trusted to deliver solutions to evolving global goals and local challenges.

This network of members assesses multilateral organisations, shapes performance standards, and champions learning and insights to strengthen development and humanitarian results and promotes accountability. Capitalising on a unique cross-multilateral system perspective and expertise, MOPAN members work together to deliver relevant, impartial, high-quality and timely performance information as a public good through an inclusive and transparent approach.

MOPAN's performance information mitigates risks, informs decision-making and supports change, helping to increase knowledge and trust amongst all stakeholders, and ultimately to achieve a stronger and better performing multilateral system.

FIGURE 1: MOPAN MEMBERS AS OF 1 SEPTEMBER 2024



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The MOPAN assessment of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) was conducted under the overall strategic guidance of Suzanne Steensen, Head of the MOPAN Secretariat. It was managed and guided by Jolanda Profos.

MOPAN is very grateful to Ambassador Elissa A. Golberg and to Maarten De Groot from Canada and to Ambassador Jeffrey Prescott and Christopher F. Tatum from the United States of America for championing this assessment on behalf of the MOPAN membership.

The assessment was conducted in cooperation with IOD PARC. Mark Singleton led the assessment with a team comprised of Sheelagh O'Reilly, Roeland Hemsteede and Josh Fuchs; Karl-Axel Lindgren also supported the assessment. The report also benefited from two external peer reviewers: Paul Balogun (independent expert) and Dr Marcus Cox (Director, Agulhas).

The external partner survey was managed by Cristina Serra Vallejo from the MOPAN Secretariat, supported by Corentin Beudaert-Ugolini.

Cristina Serra Vallejo, Camille Hewitt and David Añonuevo helped finalise the report. It was edited by Debbie Glassman, and Baseline Arts Ltd provided the layout and graphic design.

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Finally, MOPAN is grateful to all Steering Committee representatives for supporting the FAO assessment, and to its member countries for their financial contributions, which have made the report possible.

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ABOUT THE ASSESSMENT OF THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION

This report provides a diagnostic assessment and snapshot of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and tells the story of its performance within its mandate. This is the fourth MOPAN assessment of FAO, following those published in 2011, 2014 and 2017-18, and covers the period from January 2019 to April 2024, when evidence gathering for this assessment was completed (evidence gathering was extended for specific areas to late June 2024; see Chapter 4).

FAO was assessed through a rigorous exercise, drawing on multiple lines of evidence (documentary, survey, and interviews) from sources within and outside the organisation to validate and triangulate findings across 12 key performance indicators (KPIs) broken into more than 230 individual indicators. The approach was collaborative, integrating the perspectives of a wide range of stakeholders from within and outside the organisation to provide FAO as well as MOPAN Network members with a robust source of evidence-based guidance on areas for improvement to achieve enhanced organisational performance.

FAO's assessment is a two-part report composed of an Analysis Summary and a Technical and Statistical Annex.

Part I: Analysis Summary is structured into four chapters. **Chapter 1** introduces the organisation and its context; **Chapter 2** presents the conclusions about FAO's performance trajectory (past, present and future), its main strengths and opportunities for improvement; **Chapter 3** takes a detailed look at findings, and **Chapter 4** provides information about the assessment methodology and its process.

Part II: Technical and Statistical Annex of this FAO assessment report (2024) presents a detailed underlying analysis for each score, the list of supporting evidence documents, as well as the summarised results of the external partner survey that fed into this assessment.



September 2024 – Rome, Italy

FAO Director-General QU Dongyu delivers his speech during the opening session of 29th Session of the Committee on Agriculture. COAG 29 was conducted as a hybrid event from 30 September to 4 October 2024. FAO headquarters, (Plenary hall). Photo: © FAO / Cristiano Minichiello

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AAP	Accountability to affected populations	MOPAN	Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network
ADG	Assistant Director-General	MTP	Medium Term Plan
BL	Better Life	NGO	Non-government organisations
CPF	Country Programming Framework	NSHR	Non-staff human resources
DDG	Deputy Director-General	OAC	Oversight Advisory Committee
DG	Director-General	OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
DO	Decentralised Office	OED	Office of Evaluation
CCA	Common Country Analysis	OIG	Office of the Inspector General
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women	PB	Programme Budget
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease	PEMS	Performance Evaluation and Management System
CRF	Corporate Results Framework	PER	Programme Evaluation Report
CSO	Civil society organisation	PIR	Programme Implementation Report
DG	Director-General	PPA	Programme Priority Area
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo	PROMYS	Project Lifecycle Management System
EB	Executive Board	PSEA	Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
ERM	Enterprise Risk Management	PSEAH	Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment
ERP	Enterprise resource planning	PSH	Protection from Sexual Harassment
ESMG	Environmental and Social Management Guidelines	PSU	Partnerships and UN Collaboration Division
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization	PWB	Programme of Work and Budget
FESM	Framework for Environmental and Social Management	QCPR	Quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system
FPIC	Free Prior Informed Consent	RB	Regular Budget
GCF	Green Climate Fund	RBM	Results-based management
GEF	Global Environment Facility	SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
GEWE	Gender equality and women's empowerment	SEA	Sexual exploitation and abuse
HQ	Headquarters	SF	Strategic Framework
HR	Human Resources	SEAH	Sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency	SH	Sexual Harassment
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee	SIDS	Small Island Developing State
IATI	International Aid Transparency Initiative	SSF	Small-scale Fisheries Guidelines
IEE	Independent External Evaluation	SSTC	South-South Triangular Cooperation
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development	UN	United Nations
IFI	International Financial Institution	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
IPA	Immediate Plan of Action	UN-SWAP	United Nations System-wide Action Plan
IPSAS	International Public Sector Accounting Standards	UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
IT	Information Technology	USD	United States dollar
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations System	VC	Voluntary contributions
KPI	Key performance indicator	VGGT	Voluntary Guidelines on Gender and Tenure
LDC	Least Developed Countries	WFP	World Food Programme
LLDC	Landlocked Developing Countries	WHO	World Health Organization
LNOB	Leave No One Behind	XB	Extrabudgetary contributions
MAR	Management and Administration Review		
MEA	Multilateral Environment Agreement		
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation		
MI	Micro-indicator		
MO	Multilateral Organisation		



October 2024 – Rome, Italy – The FAO Committee on Food Security 52nd Session CFS52, held in the Ethiopia Room at FAO headquarters in Rome. Photo: © FAO/ Andrea Spinelli Barrile

FAO
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY





New Delhi, India – In order to help Indian farmers develop higher-yielding and disease-resistant crops, the FAO is helping to establish a biotechnology centre for advanced studies at the Indian Agriculture Research Institute in New Delhi. Photo: © FAO/ I. De Borhegyi

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RELEVANCE OF FAO'S MANDATE

In the face of accelerating climate impacts and deteriorating food security, FAO plays a vital role as the lead technical agency on agricultural and food systems, providing science-based expertise and convening governments, experts and international partners.

Over the period of this assessment, 2019-24, the combined impacts of COVID-19, geopolitical tensions, economic instability and climate disruption led to worsened global hunger levels. Today, about 733 million people are affected by hunger, 282 million people face acute food insecurity, 2.33 billion lack access to adequate food and over 2.8 billion are unable to afford a healthy diet.

FAO'S ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Between 2019-24, FAO's performance has been marked by important strategic and organisational changes amidst global crises, underscoring **FAO's central role in food security and adapting to climate change**. The FAO SF 2022-31 aligns closely with Agenda 2030 and sets new programmatic priorities, including expanding FAO's role as a partner for national climate action, which has also led to the rapid expansion of its global operations.

During this period, FAO demonstrated its ability to **innovate strategically**, with initiatives aimed at transforming global agrifood systems, and to be more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable. Additionally, FAO introduced a new organisational structure, creating new entities such as the office for science and innovation and the office for private sector development, in alignment with its SF for 2022-31.

Internally, FAO has also pursued its **reform agenda** building on previous efforts and has made progress in addressing the areas for improvement identified in the 2017-18 MOPAN assessment with several areas remaining works in progress. Specifically, FAO has continued to enhance its **internal oversight** and **control** mechanisms, which adhere to international standards. It also made improvements in areas such as control of corruption and fraud, as well as project cycle management and evaluation. Moreover, the organisation has taken further steps on **protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA)** by introducing its first dedicated strategy.

The growing demand for FAO's services at country level has resulted in a significant **shift in its funding arrangements and business model** towards project delivery across a broadening spectrum of thematic and geographic areas and a shift in responsibility to the country office level.

FAO has successfully attracted resources from a larger group of resource partners, in particular the vertical funds and international financial institutions (IFIs). This has resulted in a **sharp rise in project delivery, financed through extrabudgetary project funding**, which increased from USD 0.91 billion in 2019 to over USD 1.57 billion in 2023. Meanwhile, FAO's core budget remained fixed (at USD 502.8 million per year). This has placed increasing pressure on FAO's country network, given the lack of flexible resources to invest in building decentralised systems and capacities, and has resulted in sharp **increases in delivery risks**.

Furthermore, the rise in extrabudgetary funding has made **strategic resource allocation** more challenging, as increasing extrabudgetary contributions (XB) may lead to the fragmentation of resources across too many operational areas, leaving some priorities underfunded.

STRATEGIC SOLUTIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

In response to these challenges, FAO has taken proactive steps to strengthen its internal systems and processes for managing its growing project portfolio. It has embarked on measures to improve its ability to **map expenditure transparently** against its Strategic Framework (SF). Most recently, in June 2024, FAO launched a **Transparency Portal** featuring a project dashboard for project funding, which is improving visibility into both funding sources and destinations.

In 2023, following guidance and inputs from its governing bodies, FAO management developed proposals for a revised, modern and efficient **decentralisation** model. This model aims to improve FAO's ability to manage operations at a larger scale from its country offices, and to tailor its office structure better to diverse country needs. FAO has also recognised the need for a more robust **enterprise risk management (ERM)** system to address the heightened risks associated with a growing project portfolio. While progress has been made, further improvements are needed to ensure that risk awareness and management processes are applied consistently across the organisation. A further critical component of the transformation is **human resources**, where FAO has yet to design a people strategy and overcome operational challenges in filling positions.

FAO's ability to implement its planned reforms is currently constrained by a fixed core budget and limited influence over the allocation of extrabudgetary resources. To address this, FAO will need to establish an **open dialogue with members**, helping to build ownership of the reforms and the confidence required for a progressive transition towards more flexible funding practices.

One critical element is enhancing FAO's **results management system** to provide clear evidence of its effectiveness. It is essential for FAO to provide a clear picture of how effective its own activities and interventions have been. This matters for **learning and accountability**. The ability to demonstrate its plausible contribution to its programme priority areas (PPAs) and ultimately the SDGs will be essential to attracting more flexible resources. Given that capacity development is at the core of FAO's work, more consideration is needed to aspects of sustainability.

Another crucial aspect is improving the transparency of FAO's **budgeting and reporting**, enabling members to develop a deeper understanding of how resources are allocated effectively and efficiently to deliver development results.

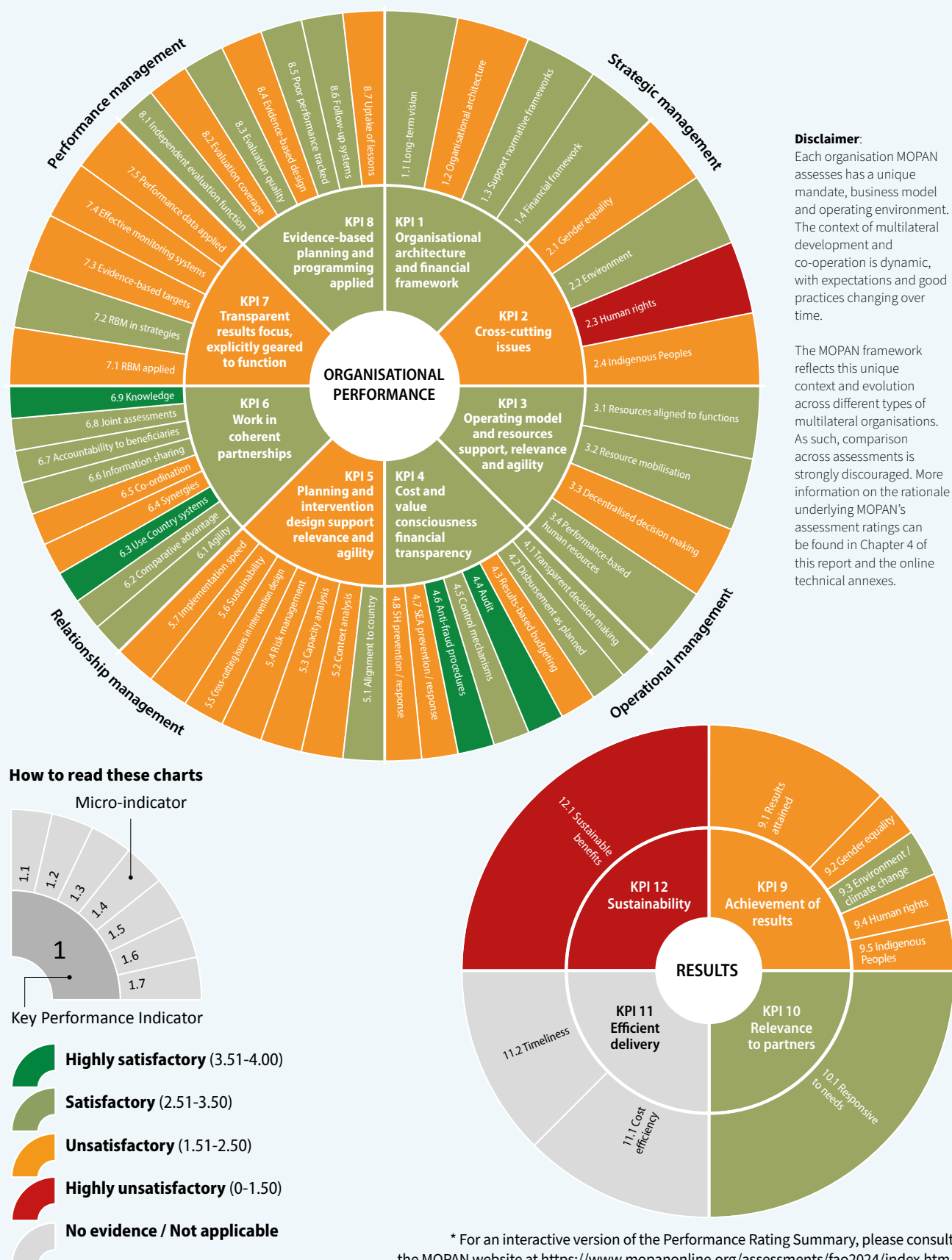
Looking ahead, FAO and its member states must explore **short-term strategies** for mobilising dedicated resources to strengthen FAO's decentralised structures, corporate systems and "back office" functions. Given the scope and complexity of FAO's reform agenda, it would benefit from a dedicated change management team.

In the **longer term**, a more sustainable solution is likely to involve increases in flexible voluntary contributions to FAO's core budget. As a *quid pro quo*, FAO will need to demonstrate its commitment to introducing higher levels of transparency, accountability, oversight and results-based management, and engage closely with its members on its reform process.

Global demand for FAO's mandate will continue to rise, especially in the context of accelerating climate disruptions. This will call for continued adaptation in both organisational systems and funding practices, in close dialogue between the organisation and its members.

For a summary of FAO's strengths and areas of opportunity, see Box 1.

FIGURE 2: PERFORMANCE RATING SUMMARY*



Box 1. Main strengths and areas of opportunity

Main strengths

- FAO's mandate and its role as the UN's lead technical agency on agricultural and food systems is increasingly relevant to global challenges.
- FAO is strategically committed to and aligned with the 2030 Agenda, and its SDG data and knowledge products are appreciated by partners as a global public good.
- The organisation is valued for its technical competence by member countries and partners alike. Its convening power around normative work is highly appreciated within global fora and member states.
- FAO has successfully mobilised additional resources to respond to members' growing needs, notably from multilateral, vertical funds and IFIs, and diversified its financial partners.
- The organisation has continued to strengthen its internal oversight and control functions and its transparency, and modernised and streamlined core business processes.
- FAO has a clear commitment, dedicated strategies, and corporate capacity for working in partnerships, and put in place mechanisms to ensure accountability to affected populations.

Areas of opportunity

- The sharp and significant increase of project funding at the country level requires equipping country offices with the right capacities to ensure solid, high-quality delivery and accountability. It also requires more strategic and agile human resources management and strengthened performance of internal controls.
- To support important organisational reforms, FAO would benefit from investing in a dialogue with members to build the confidence required for a progressive transition in funding practices towards more flexible, programme-oriented forms of support.
- More transparent budgeting and reporting, combined with a results system that defines FAO's corporate outcomes and demonstrates the organisation's plausible contribution to results, would provide powerful incentives for FAO's members to engage in such a dialogue.
- Ensuring that its interventions have a sustainable effect requires FAO to give more consideration to how capacity development can support this and how it can cluster its fragmented interventions.
- FAO needs to strengthen the application of its internal control systems, including Enterprise Risk Management. In its work on to protect from sexual misconduct, ensuring ownership of this agenda at the decentralised levels will be a next important step.
- To manage, oversee and steer the many and complex transformation efforts in which FAO is currently invested, in a holistic manner, the organisation would benefit from a dedicated change management team.

June 2024 – Aghdam, Azerbaijan

Discussing livestock management techniques as part of FAO's 'Development and application of sustainable sheep production' project.

Photo: © FAO/Javid Gurbanov

METHODOLOGY APPLIED IN THIS ASSESSMENT

This report provides a diagnostic assessment and snapshot of the organisational performance of FAO within its mandate. It covers the period from January 2019 to April 2024 although evidence gathering was extended for specific areas to June 2024. FAO was assessed through a rigorous process and a collaborative approach, integrating the perspectives of a wide range of stakeholders. The assessment provides FAO and its members with a robust account of FAO's organisational strengths and the areas where improvements can be made. The assessment draws on multiple lines of evidence (documentary, survey, interviews) from sources within and outside the organisation to validate and triangulate findings across 12 key performance indicators (KPIs) which are further broken down into more than 220 individual indicators. The assessment framework reflects international best practice and has been customised to take account of FAO's individual mandate and circumstances. This fourth MOPAN assessment of FAO builds on those completed in 2011, 2014, and 2017-18.

MOPAN's assessment approach has evolved over time to adjust to the needs of the multilateral system. This assessment has used the MOPAN 3.1 methodology (MOPAN 2020), which was endorsed by MOPAN members in early 2020. The framework draws on the international standards and reference points, as described in the MOPAN Methodology Manual, which is publicly available on the MOPAN website.





BACKGROUND TO THE ORGANISATION





May 2019 – Taveta, Kenya – Trainers of Farmers belonging to a farming group in conservation agriculture attend a FAO training session on a demonstration farm in Taveta. The group is part of a programme led by FAO that helps farmers from the region financially to buy farming products. Photo: © FAO/Luis Tato.

INTRODUCING FAO

Mission and Mandate

FAO's vision is of a world free of hunger and malnutrition where food and agriculture contribute to improving the living standards of all, especially the poorest, in an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable manner. The organisation works towards the achievement of three “global goals” stated in the Strategic Framework:

1. “Eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition, progressively ensuring a world in which people at all times have sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life;
2. Elimination of poverty and the driving forward of economic and social progress for all with increased food production, enhanced rural development and sustainable livelihoods; and
3. Sustainable management and utilisation of natural resources, including land, water, air, climate, and genetic resources, for the benefit of present and future generations” (FAO, 2021).

FAO's roles are articulated in its seven “core functions” in the Strategic Framework:

1. Assemble, analyse, monitor and improve access to data and information in areas related to FAO's mandate.
2. Facilitate and support countries and other partners in the development and implementation of normative and standard-setting instruments.
3. Facilitate, promote and support agri-food systems policy dialogue at global, regional and country levels.
4. Support institutions at all levels, including through capacity development, to prepare, implement, monitor and evaluate evidence-based policies and programmes, and leverage investments.
5. Facilitate partnerships and coalitions.
6. Advise and support activities that assemble, disseminate and improve the uptake of knowledge, technologies and good practices in the areas of FAO's mandate.
7. Advocate and communicate at national, regional and global levels.

FAO perceives its comparative advantage in terms of its basic attributes as laid out in the Strategic Framework – characteristics “intrinsic and in combination unique to FAO”. These are defined as:

1. FAO is the Specialised Agency of the United Nations for food and agriculture, with a comprehensive mandate from its members to work globally on all aspects of food and agriculture (including fisheries, forestry and natural resource management), food security and nutrition across the humanitarian-development continuum.
2. Its intergovernmental status and neutrality and the authority to provide a neutral platform where nations can call upon each other for dialogue and knowledge exchange.
3. It has the authority to request any member submit information regarding the purpose of the organisation.

4. Its regular budget is derived from assessed contributions that provide a minimum guaranteed number of resources that can be committed for priority activities agreed upon by members in the governing bodies, complemented by voluntary contributions to leverage FAO's knowledge and enhance outreach.
5. Its staff has a broad range of expertise across its areas of mandate working in an interdisciplinary fashion.
6. Its country-level presence is supported by regional and global teams of experts to respond to demands articulated by countries and regions.

Governance arrangements

FAO was founded in October 1945 by member nations. It is the oldest of the United Nations specialised agencies. Membership is open to any state or regional economic integration organisation meeting the criteria set forth in the FAO Constitution. Presently, FAO's 195 members include 194 member states and the European Union.

As a member organisation, FAO members exercise important oversight and decision-making roles. Its governance architecture is comprehensive. Governing bodies comprise the Conference (consisting of all members and associate members), the Council (consisting of 49 member nations elected by the Conference for a three-year period), 3 Council committees (i.e., Finance Committee, Programme Committee, and Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters) all of which report directly to the Council, four technical committees, five regional conferences, and the specialised committee on world food security.

Regular conference sessions are held biennially; most decisions taken on the basis of a majority of votes, with equal voting rights for each member nation. At the initiative of the FAO Council, special sessions of the Conference can also be held. The Council, led by an independent chairperson appointed by the Conference, convenes twice a year, as do the finance and programme committees. Regional conferences and technical committees of the Council convene once every two years.

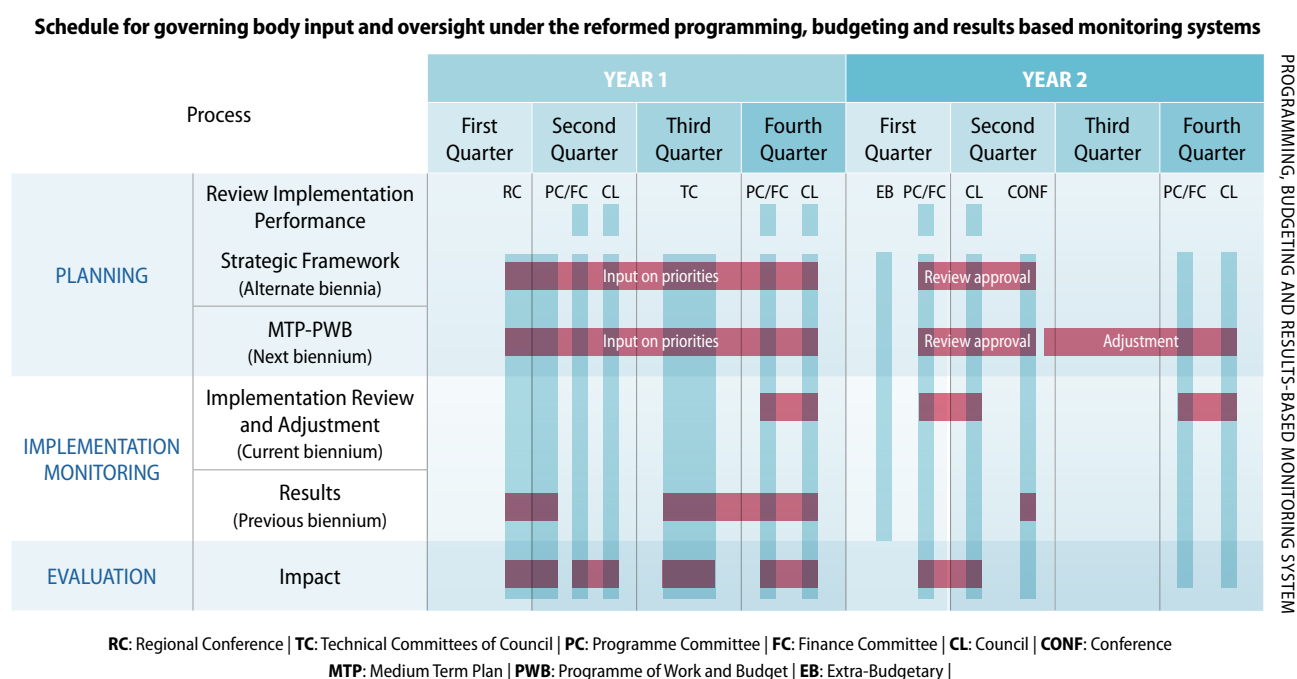
Directly and indirectly, and to varying extents, FAO's governing bodies have a mandate to contribute to and/or approve the definition of the overall policies and regulatory frameworks of the organisation; the establishment of the SF, the medium-term plan (MTP) and the programme of work and budget (PWB); and exercise or contribute to the oversight of the administration of the organisation. By way of illustration: as spelled out in the FAO Constitution, the Conference determines the policy and approves the budget of the organisation. It also adopts the general rules and financial regulations for the organisation. Effectively, this means that FAO management must seek approval from its members for changes to its policies and financial framework (see Figure 3).

Organisational structure

FAO's organisational structure comprises its HQ in Rome, 5 regional offices, 11 subregional offices, and 146 presences at the country level: 76 full-fledged FAO representations, 37 multiple accreditations, 14 FAO representations co-located in a regional/subregional office; 11 other representation arrangements, and 8 partnership and liaison offices. The functions and responsibilities of the regional, subregional, and country offices are not considered in the basic texts and are only referred to in the organisation's administrative manual.

The FAO Secretariat is led by a Director-General who is appointed for a term of four years up to a maximum of eight years. In June 2020, the Council approved adjustments to FAO's organisational structure. Consequently, the DG is supported by a core leadership team and six offices: the independent office of evaluation, the office of the inspector general, the ombudsman's office and the ethics office (both established in 2020), the legal office, and the office of strategy, programme and budget. In addition, the organigramme comprises (i) 6 offices with a cross-cutting function within the organisation; (ii) 3 centres (FAO Investment Centre, Joint FAO/WHO Centre, and the Joint FAO/IAEA Centre), which have

FIGURE 3. SCHEDULE FOR FAO GOVERNING BODY INPUT AND OVERSIGHT



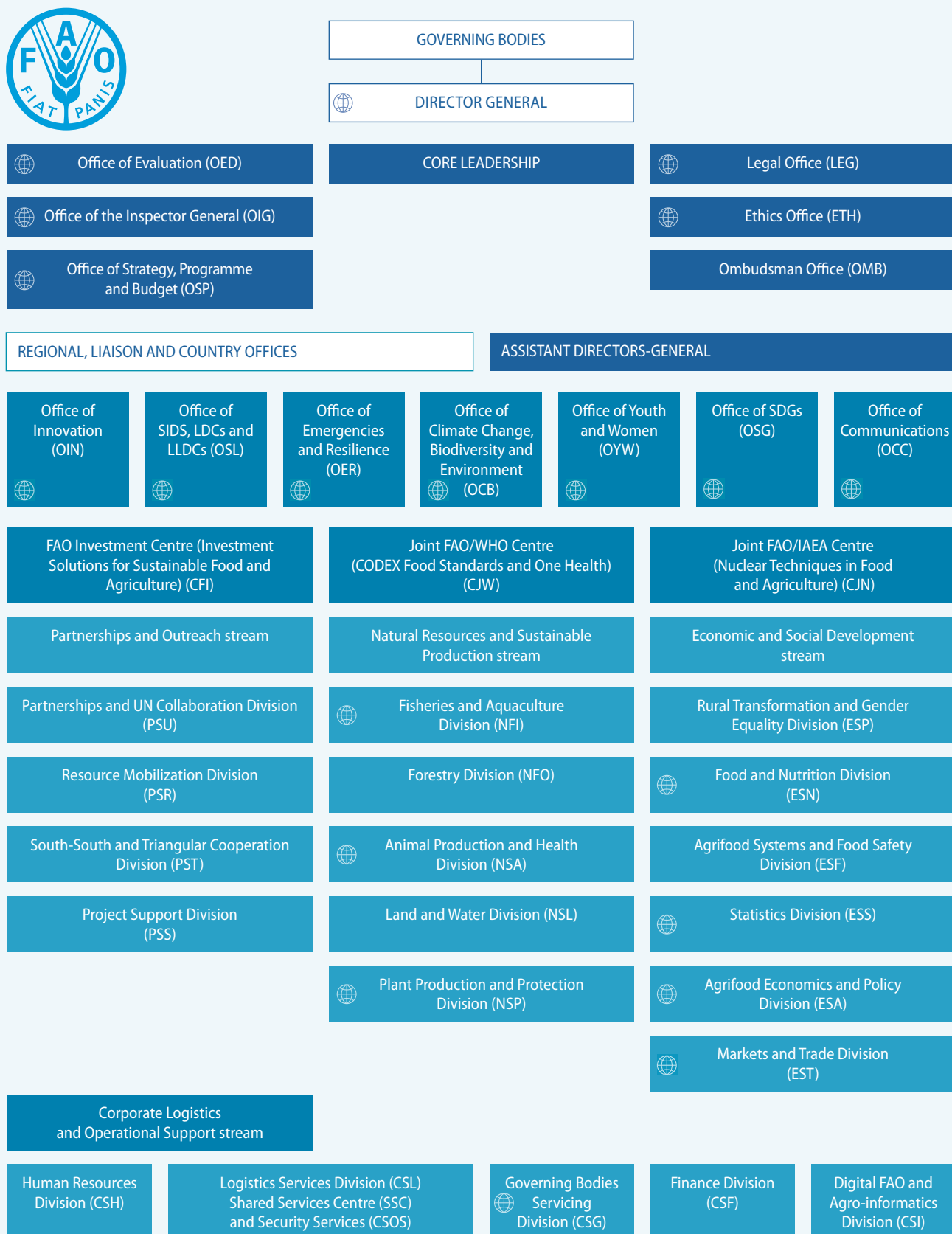
Source: FAO Basic Texts, p. 143.

a strong collaboration function with other UN agencies or with IFIs; and (iii) 15 substantive divisions, spread across 3 streams which house the specific technical, economic and social expertise of FAO or provide the operational and logistics support to ensure the enabling environment. All are serviced by 6 divisions in the corporate logistics and operational support stream, comprising human resources, finance, logistical services and the shared service centre (based in Budapest), governing bodies servicing, digital FAO and agro-informatics, and security services.

On 31 December 2023, FAO's total workforce numbered 15 639. Of these, 3 289 were staff, and 12 350 were affiliate workforce, i.e., non-staff human resources (NSHR), including consultants, contractors, national project personnel, and national contractors. This represented an overall increase in the workforce of 2 938 compared to 31 December 2019 that included 160 staff and 2 778 NSHR. Employees (19.5% of the total workforce) working at FAO HQ in Rome numbered 3 088 while the others were in decentralised offices. In total, on 31 December 2023, 5 766 employees (36.9%) were funded through the PWB's assessed contributions and 9 873 employees (63.1%, mostly NSHR) through voluntary contributions (see Figure 4).



June 2024 – Khan Younis, Gaza Strip – FAO staff walking through a destroyed farm. Photo: © FAO/ Yousef Alrozzi

FIGURE 4. **FAO HEADQUARTERS OFFICE ORGANISATIONAL CHART (AS OF 1 OCTOBER 2024)**Source: <https://www.fao.org/about/org-chart/en/>

Finances and operations

Sharp increase in voluntary contributions

At the request of its members, FAO operates on the basis of an integrated budget. Like other UN agencies, FAO draws on funding that comes from two main sources – the regular budget (financed through assessed contributions) and XB or voluntary contributions (VC). Over the years, the organisation has moved from drawing its resources solely or primarily from assessed contributions towards a predominant and growing share of extrabudgetary resources. Between 2012-23, the regular programme budget was set to a flat amount of USD 1.005 billion biennially. For the biennium 2024-25 the Conference increased the net budgetary appropriations to USD 1.021 billion. Conversely, total VC committed (approved) increased from USD 1.306 billion in 2019 to USD 2.137 billion in 2022, dropping slightly in 2023 to USD 2.020 billion. The sharp increases in project delivery can best be seen in FAO's actual expenditure over the same period, which show an increase of VCs from USD 0.91 billion in 2019 to USD 1.57 billion in 2023. VCs are the main source of finance for FAO's portfolio of over 3 800 projects, 84% of which are implemented at country level¹ (Table 1).

FUNDING SOURCE	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Assessed contributions	502.8	502.8	502.8	502.8	502.8
Voluntary contributions	782.2	960.0	960.0	1 125.1	1 125.1
Total	1 285.0	1 462.8	1 462.8	1 627.9	1 627.9

Sources: PIR 2020-21 document C 2023/8, Table 10, PIR 2020-21 document C 2023/8 Annex 3, Table 3, PIR 2022-23 document C2025/8 Annex 2 table 3 Or CL 168/3 Table 4
Notes: FAO PWB 2018-19, 2020-21, 2022-23

FAO also succeeded in diversifying its donor base, increasing the number of resource partners to 194 in 2023, up from 165 in 2019. While bilateral contributions remained flat, multilateral, vertical funds and IFIs increased their funding significantly, accounting for 49% of FAO's VC in 2023². Meanwhile, the growth of VC has made funding less predictable and has increased dependence on a narrow donor base; throughout the assessed period, approximately 70% of FAO's VC were provided by its top ten resource partners. Moreover, 95% of VC are earmarked for specific purposes, which reduces FAO's flexibility in resourcing its strategic objectives. Although FAO continues to encourage donors to provide flexible resources through 4 dedicated funding windows, contributions have fallen behind (see Table 2).

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
UN	187.0	166.2	148.9	248.5	228.8
OECD-DAC	765.5	668.8	697.5	1 027.4	1 034.4
Non-OECD-DAC	207.6	96.2	118.3	306.3	160.2
IFI	3.3	59.4	61.9	221.4	230.6
Vertical Funds	135.1	254.0	348.9	306.8	330.9
Others	7.3	36.2	443.6	26.9	35.0
Total	1 305.7	1 280.8	1 819.1	2 385.8	2 019.9

Source: FAO Transparency Portal, accessed on 19 September 2024

Between 2014 and 2022, the total amount of VC increased by 69% for development projects; by 200% for emergency and rehabilitation; and by 600% for projects covered by climate and environment vertical funds.

1. PIR 2022-23, Annex 2, para. 14.

2. PIR 2022-23, Annex 2, para. 25.



July 2024 – Bousra Ndawène, Senegal

A farmer ploughing his field in Bousra Ndawène is benefiting from the FAO-led Senegal Regional Sahel Pastoralism support program.

Photo: FAO/
Sylvain Cherkaoui

Strategic Planning

This assessment period covers the last year of the SF 2010-19, its two-year extension, and the first two years of the SF 2022-31. As called for in the basic texts, since 2010 all of FAO's work must be guided by a SF prepared for a 10-15 year period and reviewed every four years. The SF is seen as the overarching road map of the organisation, setting out the agreed vision of management and member nations of the way forward. It is based on and works towards FAO's three global goals, drawing on FAO's basic attributes and core functions.

Whereas the long-term global goals and vision have remained stable, the two SFs vary in terms of FAO's strategic and programmatic priorities. The 2010-19 SF identified five strategic objectives (SO) which then became the organising principle for programme delivery. Each SO had corresponding outcomes and outputs and was linked to several SDGs and outcome / output indicators. The FAO SF 2010-19 focused primarily on reducing hunger, improving agricultural productivity, and enhancing rural development. It aimed to increase food security through capacity building, policy advice, and sustainable resource management. The approach was largely sectoral, focusing on agriculture, fisheries, and forestry in isolated areas.

By contrast, the FAO SF 2022-31 takes a broader, systems-based approach. It addresses more complex, interconnected global challenges such as climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and rising food insecurity, with a more pronounced alignment with the SDGs. The strategic narrative guiding the 2022-31 SF introduced new language: the "Four Betters" ("aspirational impacts") and PPAs ("FAO's contribution to medium-term outcomes"). It talks about the "transformation to more efficient, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable agri-food systems for better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life, leaving no one behind." The 2022-31 SF identifies 20 PPAs: inter-disciplinary, issue-based technical themes that are meant to guide the implementation of programmes under the four betters. Based on a revised theory of change, the 2022-31 SF includes an overarching results framework, with outcome statements for each of these. By focusing on these "Four Betters", FAO's strategy seeks to promote a holistic and integrated approach to transforming food systems. This includes strengthening resilience, equity, and inclusivity, particularly for marginalized groups (Table 3).

The four betters offer an organising principle for how FAO intends to contribute to its three guiding SDGs – SDG 1 (No poverty), SDG 2 (Zero hunger), and SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities) – and support the broader SDG agenda. FAO is the custodian UN agency for 21 SDG indicators (SDG 2, 5, 6, 12, 14 and 15) and is a contributing agency for a further five indicators (SDG 1, 14 and 15).

The newer framework emphasises innovation, digital transformation, and sustainability more strongly. It integrates climate-smart agriculture, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable land use as central pillars of its strategy. Additionally, partnerships with the private sector and digital innovators play a larger role, reflecting a shift towards collaboration with a wider range of stakeholders to address food system challenges at global and local levels.

TABLE 3. **FAO'S FOUR BETTERS AND 20 PROGRAMME PRIORITY AREAS**

BETTERS	PROGRAMME PRIORITY AREAS	
BETTER PRODUCTION	1	BP1: Innovation for sustainable agriculture production
	2	BP2: Blue transformation
	3	BP3: One Health
	4	BP 4: Small-scale producers' equitable access to resources
	5	BP5: Digital agriculture
BETTER NUTRITION	6	BN1: Healthy diets for all
	7	BN2: Nutrition for the most vulnerable
	8	BN3: Safe food for everyone
	9	BN4: Reducing food loss and waste
	10	BN5: Transparent markets and trade
BETTER ENVIRONMENT	11	BE1: Climate change mitigating and adapted agri-food systems
	12	BE2: Bioeconomy for sustainable food and agriculture
	13	BE3: Biodiversity and ecosystem services for food and agriculture
BETTER LIFE	14	BL1: Gender equality and rural women's empowerment
	15	BL2: Inclusive rural transformation
	16	BL3: Achieving sustainable urban food systems
	17	BL4: Agriculture and food emergencies
	18	BL5: Resilient agri-food systems
	19	BL6: Hand-in-Hand (HIH) Initiative
	20	BL7: Scaling up investment

Source: adapted from FAO, SF 2022-31, table 2

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

Changes to the operating context and policy environment

During the 2019-23 period, developing countries have been hit by multiple new and overlapping crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, rising geopolitical tensions, global economic turbulence and accelerating climate disruption – alongside longstanding structural challenges to food security. FAO is increasingly called upon to lead the response to these challenges at global and national levels.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 triggered widespread disruption to global food systems. Lockdowns, border closures and supply chain interruptions had profound effects on food production, distribution and consumption. These disruptions disproportionately affected the livelihoods of vulnerable groups such as smallholder farmers, agricultural labourers, and food vendors, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. Women were particularly affected.

FAO's response to the COVID-19 pandemic was comprehensive and multifaceted

The organisation moved quickly to address both the immediate needs of vulnerable populations, and the long-term challenges posed by the crisis. The response centred on several key areas: early warning and advocacy, global response and coordination, ensuring continuity of food supply chains, targeted support for smallholder farmers and rural communities, provision of nutrition services, preventing the transmission of zoonotic diseases, promoting innovation and digitalisation across food and agriculture sectors, strengthening data collection and analysis, and advocacy for food security and support to vulnerable groups. For example, FAO scaled up social protection programmes involving cash transfers, emergency food aid, and support for maintaining agricultural productivity. Many initiatives pivoted toward ensuring food security during the pandemic by promoting local food systems, boosting resilience, and enhancing social protection mechanisms to mitigate the effects of the crisis. On nutrition, FAO worked with partners, including the World Food Programme (WFP) and UNICEF, to ensure that food assistance programmes continued to reach those in need. School feeding programmes, which were disrupted by school closures, were adapted to provide take-home rations or vouchers to children and their families. The pandemic also accelerated the use of digital tools and technology within FAO's operations. FAO initiated digital advisory services such as the data in emergencies hub, which provided real-time data on food security, agricultural production, and market conditions during the pandemic, and online platforms to continue providing support to farmers, governments, and partners. FAO also promoted the use of e-commerce platforms to help farmers sell their produce directly to consumers when traditional markets were closed.

The pandemic affected FAO not only programmatically but also organisationally, prompting new ways of working across the organisation. Confronted with lockdowns and travel restrictions, FAO rapidly shifted to remote working arrangements to maintain operations. This required upgrading IT infrastructure and providing staff with digital tools and training. Virtual meetings, online collaboration platforms, and remote project management became standard, reducing the need for physical presence while improving global coordination. In regions where travel was restricted, FAO relied more on local staff and digital monitoring tools to continue essential field operations. In terms of staff well-being, FAO implemented flexible working arrangements and health safety protocols and offered mental health support to ensure the well-being of employees. The crisis also accelerated the digital transformation of FAO's processes in the face of operational challenges.

The global food security crisis highlighted the need for stronger resilience mechanisms

The food crisis, triggered in 2022 by a convergence of climate change effects, consequences of the pandemic and, principally, the war in Ukraine, severely disrupted global supplies of key agricultural products, causing sharp price increases. Rising energy prices, also driven by the war in Ukraine, significantly increased the cost of food production, transportation, and fertilizers, with a direct impact on agricultural productivity in many parts of the world. High inflation, increased debt, worsening food insecurity and supply chain disruptions increased hunger and malnutrition, triggering social and political unrest. Low and middle-income countries were hit the hardest, with vulnerable populations disproportionately affected.

The crisis highlighted the interconnectedness of global food systems and underscored the need for stronger resilience mechanisms to mitigate the impacts of future shocks. FAO responded in a multifaceted way, focusing on strengthening global food security governance, ramping up its emergency and resilience programmes, building resilient food systems, and supporting the development of local and regional food systems to reduce reliance on global supply chains.

The crises brought new impetus to FAO's partnerships

Both the pandemic and the global food security crisis have underscored the importance of inter-agency collaboration. FAO's main UN partners were WFP, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), World Health Organization (WHO), and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). This collaboration focused on food security, nutrition,

climate change, sustainable agriculture, One Health initiatives and climate adaptation strategies. New or strengthened partnerships also emerged, such as increased cooperation with the UNICEF on nutrition interventions, with UN Women to address gender-specific challenges in food security and rural livelihoods, and with the UN Development Programme to promote sustainable development goals and build resilience in vulnerable countries. The partnership with the World Bank intensified, with both organisations working closely on emergency response, sustainable agricultural investments, and building resilience.

ORGANISATIONAL REFORMS UNDERTAKEN DURING THE ASSESSED PERIOD

Starting late 2019, FAO introduced an ambitious reform agenda. It involved changes to the organisational structure, business processes and ways of working. Together, these reforms sought to improve alignment between the organisation and its 2022-31 SF and corresponding thematic and programmatic priorities, while building a healthier working environment. Some of these reforms have already begun to bear fruit, as demonstrated by growing levels of staff satisfaction and appreciation expressed during interviews; in other areas, progress has been slower.

Structural changes were first introduced at HQ. The first involved the creation of three new offices: (1) the office for innovation, to be headed by the newly created chief scientist position; (2) office for small island developing states (SIDS), least developed countries (LDCs) and landlocked developing countries (LLDCs); and (3) the biodiversity cluster. These were followed in 2020 by a more profound change to the organisational structure as a whole. A new organigramme was developed, consisting of offices, centres and divisions, replacing the pre-existing departments and units. The offices replaced the Strategic Programme Teams, which had previously been established for the delivery of the previous SF. The 13 offices cover cross-cutting areas. Two of these were new functions: the Ombuds Office and the Office for SDGs. Others had already existed as units in the previous structure but were repositioned to highlight their relevance and impact across the organisation's functional areas. In 2023, FAO created an Office for Women and Youth. Divisions house FAO's technical, economic and social expertise and provide operational and logistics support to ensure the enabling environment. They are grouped into four streams: partnerships and outreach; natural resources and sustainable production; economic and social development; and corporate logistics and operational support. The three centres (investment centre, joint FAO/WHO Centre, and joint FAO/IAEA Centre) promote joint working with other UN agencies and IFIs. Other changes included the strengthening of internal oversight (ethics, ombuds, OIG), and adding capacity for human resources and procurement functions. After completing the restructuring of FAO's HQ, similar changes were made to regional and sub-regional offices.

Alongside these structural reforms, several other reforms and initiatives were undertaken and/or continued. These included the development in 2020 of a Human Resources Strategic Action Plan 2020-2021 (extended in 2022), comprising several measures/reforms to establish the necessary basic building blocks for improved alignment with the SF, including (i) delegations of authority for human resource management (HRM); (ii) development and implementation of transparent, streamlined recruitment policies; (iii) delivering key audit recommendations that clarify and streamline the selection, use and application of the affiliated workforce; and (iv) development of an human resource strategic plan to align with FAO's strategic, programmatic and operational priorities. In addition, FAO embarked on a comprehensive enterprise resource planning project, which involved improvements to business processes, project cycle management tools and others, strengthening transparency and accountability across several functions (internal control, investigations, risk management, procurement, resource mobilisation), and enhancing its shared service centre. Moreover, progress was made in the realm of ERM (for further details, see chapter II, Overview of Key Findings).

To strengthen internal coherence, several measures were taken to abolish internal silos and encourage cross-Agency collaboration, both horizontally and vertically. As part of the restructuring exercises, management structures and reporting lines were altered. A core leadership team was established, consisting of deputy director generals,

the chief economist, chief scientist and chef de cabinet. The core leadership team would work jointly in a cross-sectoral and global manner, supporting the director-general in all areas of the organisation's mandate. The assistant director-general level was first redefined and shortly afterwards abolished, although more recently, the title itself has been retained and awarded to some directors (OSP, Fisheries and Aquaculture). Moreover, the responsibility and accountability of Directors was enhanced, and new innovative reporting lines introduced, based on a so-called modular approach. FAO staff expressed satisfaction with the introduction of this approach and corresponding adjustments to the reporting lines, indicating that some progress had indeed been made to encourage cross-organisation collaboration and coordination. Another important initiative is the set of actions taken in response to the 2019 employee satisfaction survey (E2S) in four related areas: professional development, ethical workplace, new ways of working, and communication. The initiative is seen as a main driver of cultural change, with evidence from successive staff satisfaction surveys of progress across all four areas.

Less progress was made at the country office level, despite growing needs. Over the years, and increasingly during the 2019-23 period, FAO's centre of gravity has shifted towards the country level. More than ever before, field operations are in the driving seat in terms of alignment with member states' priorities and capacities, resource mobilisation, partnerships, and management and delivery of a fast-growing project portfolio (constituting 3 800 active projects on 31 December 2023, according to FAO's Transparency Portal). During the assessment period, several internal and external audits highlighted the need for a proper restructuring and capacity strengthening of decentralised offices, particularly country offices. In 2021, the Office of the Inspector General conducted audits of decentralised offices' governance structure and capacity, and of recurrent and systemic issues in their operations. Significant weaknesses and risks were found regarding internal governance, staffing and resource allocation. An earlier audit of FAO's project cycle management (2019) had already highlighted the need for improvement in several areas.

In its 2023 management and administration review (MAR), the Joint Inspection Unit of the UN System (JIU) found that "while FAO does provide an overview of its offices outside HQ, it does not offer a clear indication of the relationship between regional, subregional and country offices and HQ, nor does it refer to the relationship between liaison and partnership and liaison offices and regional representations or the seat of the organisation." The JIU also expressed concern that "[w]ith the exponential growth of extrabudgetary resources and projects over the previous decade, each element of the field presence of FAO needs to be fit for purpose. Thus, the functions, responsibilities, and operating procedures of regional, subregional, country, liaison and partnership and liaison offices should be clearly defined and updated, so as to not only reflect their roles within the organisational structure but also to be able to respond to the demands of member nations and donor and financial institutions for efficient and effective use of resources."³

In an effort to address these and other concerns, FAO's 2023 policy paper on the country office network⁴ highlighted that, despite the increase in VC and, correspondingly, the growing variation in the size and complexity of country portfolios and associated levels of risk, the staffing model for FAO country offices had remained static. In addition, FAO acknowledged several gaps and challenges: criteria for resource allocation to COs were not clear and transparently determined, staffing profiles did not reflect the evolving demands on COs, structural, budgetary and administrative setups were rigid and not tailored to local contexts and, finally, COs lacked 'fit for purpose' procedures and appropriate delegations of authority, together with internal control capacities adequate for the increased size and complexity of the programme portfolio and the associated risk. Overall, the FAO Secretariat concluded that the organisation had failed to match the needs of the COs with the adequate capacity, systems, and capabilities.

3. Review of management and administration in the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Joint Inspection Unit (JIU/REP/2023/5)

4. Country Office Network – Current Status and Way Forward: a policy paper (doc – APRC/24/11 - December 2023)

FAO management is currently addressing this through the development of a new decentralisation model, with greater flexibility in staffing profiles and allocation of non-earmarked resources, and greater pooling of resources at regional level, to boost capacity to deliver at scale in-country. However, FAO's Governing Bodies have determined that the proposed measures must be budget-neutral and not involve a reallocation of resources from HQ and/or other decentralised offices to the country office level. This imposes a significant constraint on FAO's ability to deliver its planned decentralisation reforms. Under such conditions, it remains to be seen whether FAO is able to put in place sufficient capacity at the country level to manage its growing portfolio and the associated risks.

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September 2023 – Vigo, Spain

Activity during the visit and inspections of Vigo Port of the international course on fisheries law, in collaboration with the Xunta de Galicia, the Port of Vigo, and MarinnLeg. This course is covered by a Letter of Acceptance between FAO and the co-organisers.
Photo: © FAO/
Ricardo Castelo





OVERVIEW OF KEY FINDINGS





December 2023 – Satun, Thailand. Compressor divers of the Urak Lawoi ethnic group jump into the water to deploy their artisanal fish trap on the seafloor during a fishing trip among the islands of the Adang-Rawi Archipelago. Photo: © FAO / Sirachai Arunrugstichai

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

When assessing FAO's performance between 2019 and 2024, it is important to recognise the organisation's starting point and financial constraints.

For the past 15 years, FAO has gone through successive rounds of programmatic and organisational reforms, starting in 2009 in response to the findings of the first-ever independent external evaluation (IEE) of 2007, commissioned by the FAO Council and Conference. The IEE had concluded that “the world needs FAO”, and that FAO needed “a transformative strategy of reform with growth.” It also concluded that FAO’s overall governance by members had been “failing the Organisation”: it had “not ensured an adequate corporate strategy with realistic objectives, ha[d] not assured that means [were] aligned with ends and [had] not been measuring the Secretariat’s performance against agreed goals.” It found that “the main factor inhibiting effective governance of FAO [was] a low level of mutual trust and understanding within the membership and between some parts of the membership and the Secretariat.” (FAO IEE, para xii, 2007).

The IEE prompted a comprehensive reform agenda known as the 2009-11 Immediate Plan of Action (IPA), aimed at building an agile, efficient and effective fit-for-purpose organisation. Reforms were initiated across many performance areas, including governance and oversight, structure, culture, strategic management, resource mobilisation, operational management, performance management, and partnerships. The IPA led to notable change in some areas, e.g., the governance architecture, plans for the introduction of results-based management, and strengthening of the evaluation function. Modest progress was achieved in others, such as decentralisation, oversight and accountability, efficiency, enterprise resource planning and risk management. The 2011 MOPAN assessment concluded that while FAO was “committed to organisation-wide reform and has acted on recommendations of the 2007 Independent External Evaluation (IEE), there is still much work to be done to complete the reform process”.

From 2012 onwards, emphasis shifted to implementation of FAO’s 2010-19 SF, through which FAO had managed to sharpen its strategic focus by reducing the number of strategic objectives and organisational results and more closely aligning them with its core mandate and comparative advantage. The 2014 MOPAN assessment concluded that “FAO is in the process of making deep and wide-ranging reforms across the organisation, aimed at improving systems and practices which were problematic in the past and specifically to become a more transparent and result-oriented organisation. Many of these efforts are ongoing and, as such, must be considered a work-in-progress.”

The 2017-18 MOPAN assessment concluded that FAO remained an “organisation in transformation” (MOPAN, 2019). It based its conclusion on, among others, the 2013 revisions made to the 2010-19 SF, changes to the organisational structure, the introduction of a matrix management system, a revised performance management policy framework for staff, and the introduction of new measures to promote risk management. Through its reform process, FAO had consolidated its strategic vision and worked towards strengthening its functioning as an organisation. Its clear, compelling and focused strategic vision had fostered a more integrated, multidisciplinary way of working. In addition, FAO had demonstrated a clear commitment to working in partnerships, building on its knowledge base and longstanding relationships. FAO was also seen to be strengthening its engagement with partners through a more strategic approach to resource mobilisation. Moreover, it had established sound, high-quality financial management systems and improved its internal control systems.

The assessment also concluded that some areas of the institutional change process required further work. In FAO’s efforts to improve risk management, strategic risk had been left behind. Moreover, FAO had not defined an appropriate balance between core and VCs for its business model, with its normative functions and role as a provider of global public knowledge relying on its core budget, and with a large share of voluntary contributions coming from just five donors. A third, and ongoing, challenge was timely delivery. Despite progress on various corporate performance reporting and accountability systems, FAO was not yet able to generate a complete set of performance

data and integrate it into its management systems. Finally, the assessment pointed to shortcomings in the design and use of the corporate results framework, notably that it gave insufficient visibility to FAO's crucial normative work. In terms of achievement of development results, the assessment concluded that results were mixed.

In its management response, FAO expressed its commitment to address the recommendations in close collaboration with all stakeholders. FAO welcomed the assessment, acknowledged the need to improve the visibility of its normative work and further strengthen its approach to strategic risk management (FAO, 2019).

These successive rounds of strategic and organisational reforms took place at a time of financial austerity. For over two decades, FAO's assessed contributions had remained flat, triggering budget cuts to HR management and financial administration among other things, despite a growing presence at decentralised levels (regional, subregional and country offices), increased extrabudgetary funding, and a growing workforce. Thus, other than the IPA, for which bespoke funding was made available, institutional reforms were constrained by FAO's zero-growth financing conditions and a lack of "reform funding".

OVERALL PERFORMANCE REFLECTIONS

The deterioration of global food security conditions over the 2019-24 period and the growing urgency of global climate action have made FAO's mandate more relevant than ever. In 2023, about 733 million people faced hunger, around 2.33 billion lacked access to adequate food, 282 million people in 59 countries faced acute food insecurity, and over 2.8 billion people (over one-third of the world's population) could not afford a healthy diet. Developing countries have been hit by multiple new and overlapping crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, geo-political tensions, global economic turbulence and accelerating climate disruption – alongside longstanding structural challenges to food security. As a global leader in agriculture and food security, FAO is increasingly called upon to lead the response to these challenges, at global and national levels.

As a specialised organisation with a longstanding footprint in member states, FAO continues to be well appreciated by its members and partners for its mandate, basic attributes and core functions. The MOPAN assessment concludes that FAO has retained those strengths. It has a clear mandate, solid core functions, strong partnerships, and a commitment to strategic innovation. It has also taken positive steps to address issues raised in MOPAN's previous assessments, including by diversifying its resource partners and strengthening internal coherence.

Despite tight constraints on its core budget, FAO has embarked on an ambitious programme of reforms over the assessment period, which have helped it to better align the organisation with strategic priorities. Yet like many UN agencies, it faces a growing challenge with the rapid rise of earmarked contributions against the constraint of a regular budget that had remained flat for 12 years and only saw its first small increase in the 2024-25 biennium. This is hampering FAO's flexibility to allocate resources against its strategic objectives and stretching the capacity of its country offices. FAO is in the process of addressing these challenges. Solving them will call for close dialogue with members, to create the preconditions for a progressive transition towards more sustainable funding practices in support of core functions.

This MOPAN assessment aims to provide a platform for dialogue between FAO and its membership, highlighting strengths on which FAO can build and issues that merit enhanced engagement. In this first section, we provide an overview of the main findings from the assessment, starting with a short description of the period prior to 2019, when the last MOPAN assessment was concluded. This is followed by an outline of FAO's organisational journey, including issues that FAO – secretariat and members alike – may wish to consider for the future.



**February 2022 –
Ethiopia, Oromia
and Somali regions**

20 year-old Fatuma Ankle, a mother of one standing next to corpses of cattle in Gode Wereda, Gebias village of Ethiopia's Somali region.

Photo: © FAO/
Michael Tewelde

MAIN FINDINGS OF THE 2017-18 MOPAN ASSESSMENT

The 2017-18 MOPAN assessment acknowledged that FAO was an organisation in transformation. It had established a clear, compelling, and focused strategic vision that had fostered a more integrated, multidisciplinary way of working. In addition, FAO had demonstrated a clear commitment to working in partnerships, building on its knowledge base and longstanding relationships, and with a more strategic approach to resource mobilisation. Moreover, it had established high quality financial management systems and improved its internal controls.

The institutional change process remained a work in progress, with some areas requiring further attention. FAO was yet to develop a fully functional ERM system with sufficient attention to strategic risks. Its financial model lacked clarity and funding needed to be diversified further. FAO also needed to reduce delays in delivery. The assessment pointed to shortcomings in the design and use of the corporate results framework. Although it commended FAO for its capability to respond in a timely manner in emergency contexts, it concluded that FAO could improve in reaching its stated development results and delivering efficiently (Box 2).

Box 2. How has FAO responded to MOPAN's findings from 2017-18?

FAO has made progress in addressing the areas for improvement identified in the 2017-18 MOPAN assessment, but several remain a work in progress.

1. **Risk management: FAO now places more emphasis on strategic risk management.** It has raised awareness, established policies, integrated risk management in business process, and developed a corporate risk action plan. However, a 2023 OIG report still rated FAO's risk management maturity as "developing", requiring major improvement in FAO's risk management practices (OIG AUD0223, 2023). The Inspector General therefore recommended that FAO "invest further resources in, and provide strong managerial commitment to, risk management" to implement the corporate risk action plan (see KPI 4).
2. **Normative work: The 2022-31 corporate results framework now highlights normative outputs across its Programme Priority Areas.** However, despite an expressed intent to "bring together normative and project work in an outcome-focused programmatic approach" (MTP 2022-25, p.23), monitoring, evaluating, and learning from normative work remain weak, with poor visibility on FAO's own achievements at output and outcome level (see KPI 9).
3. **Corporate performance reporting: FAO's corporate results framework (CRF) does not demonstrate how its interventions contribute to its strategic objectives** (see KPI 7). Under its new SF and updated CRF, FAO tracks the outputs of its operations and movement towards the SDG targets and indicators to which they are intended to contribute. However, it does not attempt to identify FAO's own contribution to these outcomes, at country or higher levels. Nor does it set outcome-level targets at the corporate level, to provide visibility on whether it is achieving its intended results. FAO's corporate monitoring systems and capacities remain under development, with the introduction of a new integrated project lifecycle management system (PROMYS) which is delayed until 2026.
4. **Human Resources Management:** FAO bolstered the HR Division in 2020-21 and re-established the HR policy unit. It undertook workforce planning and developed and implemented recruitment policies that are more transparent and streamlined. However, progress in other areas of HR management has been slow (see KPI 3). FAO still lacks an overarching HR management / People Strategy, despite the rapid growth in its workforce. Lengthy recruitment periods and high vacancy rates are a particular concern. They hamper FAO's ability to align its workforce with organisational priorities. This was confirmed by the JIU's MAR of 2023.
5. **Programme and Budget integration: FAO introduced a single budgetary framework in 2019,** after MOPAN had pointed to key gaps in FAO's whole-of-organisation view and oversight of performance. The increase in XB funding had made this issue even more urgent. Now, MTPs and PWB documents integrate assessed and (projected) VCs. However, budget documents do not yet include clear linkages between cost and results in a results-based manner.
6. **Timely programme implementation:** FAO continues to face challenges with timely programme implementation, hindered by complex business processes. The need to streamline organisational systems was flagged by the IEE in 2007 and in all three MOPAN assessments. Although FAO's emergency work is more agile, delays in project implementation persist and have become more acute with its expanding portfolio. The ERP project was launched to address these issues, but insufficient resources have delayed progress.

FAO'S PERFORMANCE JOURNEY

FAO's growing relevance is driving important strategic and organisational changes

FAO's mandate is increasingly central to global challenges. During the 2019-24 period, the world has witnessed deteriorating food security conditions caused by multiple crises, including conflict and instability, climate change, economic shocks, supply chain disruptions, soaring energy prices, pests and diseases, including the COVID-19 pandemic. These overlapping crises have underscored FAO's role as a global leader in agriculture and food security, triggered innovation, reinforced partnerships, and driven FAO's resource mobilisation.

At the global level, FAO continues to play a vital role as a provider of science-based technical expertise and convenor of governments, experts and international partners. FAO members continued to express their appreciation for FAO's expertise and regard the organisation as relevant and responsive to their needs and priorities, including during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Moreover, FAO has demonstrated an ability to innovate, both strategically and operationally. Building on its core functions, FAO seeks to support the 2030 Agenda by promoting the transformation to more efficient, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable agrifood systems for better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life, leaving no one behind. FAO's SF 2022-31 is closely aligned with Agenda 2030 and has paved the way for new programmatic priorities and actions (see KPI 1 for further details).

FAO has successfully introduced a new organisational structure with an innovative oversight and accountability framework with two reporting lines, along with measures to strengthen vertical and horizontal coherence. It has created new entities to reflect its strategic priorities, including by appointing a Chief Scientist and establishing the Office for Science and Innovation, an office of the SDGs, and an Office for Women and Youth. Other internal reforms have addressed enterprise resource planning, project cycle management, and HR management, alongside professional development, new ways of working, an ethical workplace, and communication. Combined, these reforms have helped to align the organisation with its 2022-31 SF and corresponding thematic and programmatic priorities.

FAO has continued to strengthen its internal oversight and control functions, and to modernise and streamline core business processes (see KPI 4 for further details). FAO updated its internal control framework in 2020 and provided more resources for the internal control function. FAO has policies, guidelines and measures against fraud and other corrupt practices, and for whistleblower protection, as well as sound performance tracking systems. The OIG was expanded, and its independence is respected. External auditors and FAO's Oversight Advisory Committee (OAC) consider the internal control *system* to be in place. Nonetheless, the JIU, OIG, and external auditors continue to report shortcomings in terms of internal control *performance*, notably with regard to ERM. In addition, FAO established separate offices for the ethics and ombuds functions in 2020 and expressed a commitment to align their contractual arrangements with best practice to ensure independence. Steps were taken to reinforce FAO's project cycle management (see KPIs 5 and 7), ERM and the evaluation function (KPI 8). The quality of evaluations is improving, thanks to better quality assurance policies and practices.

FAO has also made some progress on the protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and sexual harassment (SH), although more is needed (see KPI 4 in the technical annex for more detail). The organisation recently introduced its first dedicated PSEA strategy, with defined roles and responsibilities, and uses action plans to support its implementation. Compliance rates for mandatory training in areas such as gender equality, ethics and integrity, prevention of fraud, corruption and sexual misconduct are on the rise. The commitment of FAO's leadership to PSEA has yet to be felt in country offices' daily work, however. FAO announced a victim-centred approach to SEA in its new policy, but this has yet to take hold. FAO is also revising its policy on the protection from SH. Its mechanisms to track progress are limited and its action plans mainly aspirational, although it has begun to strengthen its human

resources dealing with the issue. Financial resources and the link between efforts in country offices (where most SH allegations tend to originate) and HQ need clarifying. Training compliance rates among the affiliate workforce should be improved. While multiple mechanisms have been established FAO has yet to build the trust of its personnel in these systems, as many fear retaliation or believe the organisation would not act.

Sharp rises in extra-budgetary project funding have made strategic resource allocation more challenging and placed acute demands on FAO's country offices.

The growing demand for FAO's services at country level has resulted in a significant shift in its funding arrangements and business model, towards project delivery across a broadening range of thematic and geographic areas. While the regular budget has remained fixed at USD 502.8 million per year, XB funding, earmarked for specific projects and programmes, soared sharply from USD 0.91 billion in 2019 to over USD 1.57 billion in 2023. FAO has successfully attracted resources from a larger group of resource partners, including the Global Environmental Facility, the Green Climate Fund, and IFIs. By the end of 2023, FAO had 194 resource partners, although more than two-thirds of total voluntary contributions were still provided by FAO's top 10 contributors. These achievements exceeded FAO's own expectations. In the 2022-23 PWB, FAO had estimated that it would spend USD 2.25 billion in extrabudgetary funds; in practice, it spent USD 3.15 billion. The expansion is most notable in the realm of emergency and resilience (accounting for 41% of FAO's portfolio in 2023)¹ and climate change.

These inter-related shifts in its funding and business models have made it more challenging for FAO to allocate resources strategically in support of its mandate and strategic priorities (see KPI 3). Although all XB funding must link to priorities in FAO's SF 2022-31, there is nevertheless a risk that FAO's portfolio becomes overly projectized, hampering its aim of steering towards more medium-term, programmatic approaches to delivering its mandate, as set out in the latest SF. The sharp increase of its emergency and resilience portfolio and corresponding operational challenges creates a risk that FAO may lose focus on its comparative advantage and niche expertise as a knowledge-based, specialised agency setting norms and standards and providing global public goods. Earmarked XB funding also skews the allocation of resources towards a small number of PPAs. FAO's static regular budget (funded through assessed contributions) is primarily spent on organisational overheads, leaving very little room to reallocate resources to underfunded PPAs. There is some evidence from evaluations to suggest that FAO's technical interventions are becoming increasingly downstream and fragmented. The rise in XB funding may also lead to resources becoming spread across too many operational areas. The large number of projects also places strain on FAO's business processes, which were not designed to support project-based work at this scale, with adverse effects on the timeliness, effectiveness and sustainability of FAO's work. As evaluations show, portfolio fragmentation risks undermining effectiveness, coherence, and the realisation of a programmatic approach, while adding considerable managerial and operational responsibilities to country offices (see KPIs 9-10).

Recent growth in project funding has also resulted in a significant shift in responsibilities to the country office level. The rapid growth of FAO's project portfolio has increased the demands placed on country offices within FAO's delivery model.² The portfolio growth has brought a need for greater country-level capacity in areas such as project cycle management, accountability for results, and back office functions such as financial management, procurement, HR management and ERM, and to streamline business processes and accountability structures. Compounding this,

1. In the 2022-23 biennium, out of a total of USD 3.15 billion XB expenditures across all four "Better"s, the share of "Better Life" was almost 63% (USD 1.95 billion). "Better Production" absorbed 18.4%, "Better Environment" 13.9% and Better Nutrition 4.7%. Of the 6 PPAs in "Better Life", BL3 (agriculture and food emergencies) and BL4 (resilient agrifood systems) absorbed 71.9% and 22.4% respectively. During this biennium, 4 out of 20 PPAs accounted for 71.6% of all XB expenditures (BL3, BL4, BE1 and BE3). Nearly half of all XB expenditures was spent on one PPA, namely agriculture and food emergencies (45%, or USD 1.41 billion). Source: FAO PWB 2022-23 and PIR 2022-23.

2. FAO's growing project portfolio, mostly earmarked, is spread across 169 recipients (mainly member countries). The number of projects grew from 3 136 in late 2018 to 3 835 by the end of 2023. On an annual basis, small-scale TCP projects account for approximately 20% of all projects. In 2019, FAO spent USD 0.98 billion on project delivery and secured USD 1.5 billion in approvals. By the end of 2023, these numbers had increased to USD 1.7 billion and USD 2.1 billion respectively. On average, 72% of these were classified at the country level, 7-8% at the regional and subregional levels, 4-5% at the interregional level, and 15-16% at the global level, although project delivery itself occurred primarily at the country level.

UNDS reforms have required FAO to intensify its coordination and collaboration with UN partners, requiring more decentralised capacity. Whether or not the current high levels of XB are sustained, strengthening FAO's decentralised structures is an urgent priority to mitigate higher delivery risks.

FAO has recognised this challenge and taken several initiatives in response but remains constrained by its zero-growth regular budget. It initiated changes at decentralized levels in 2023, reorganising its regional and subregional offices to align with the new structure at HQ. Since then, based on guidance and inputs from FAO's governing bodies, FAO management has developed proposals for a revised, modern and efficient decentralisation model. Its aim is to improve the organisation's ability to deliver at scale in-country, and to tailor its office structure better to diverse country contexts. For these and other reforms to succeed, however, adjustments will be needed both to FAO's business processes and to its funding profile.

To bring its reforms to a successful conclusion, FAO will need to establish an open dialogue with its members. Such a dialogue is needed to broaden ownership of reforms and build the confidence that is required for a progressive transition in funding practices

If the goal of such a dialogue with member states is to secure higher amounts of flexible and unearmarked VCs, the organisation will need to provide incentives, such as documenting a demonstrable impact of its work and providing a high degree of transparency.

Demonstrating how FAO contributes to results will be an important part of this (see KPI 7). A results-based management system that allows FAO to plausibly demonstrate its own contribution to its PPAs and ultimately the SDGs will be essential to attracting more flexible resources. While the previous SF set out indicators for measuring FAO's contribution at various levels, the SF 2022-31 has taken a different approach. FAO no longer seeks to measure its own contribution to development outcomes. Instead, under the current results framework, it tracks its outputs, aggregated by country or theme, and the SDG targets to which those outputs are intended to contribute. Another challenge is the absence of results targets against the Four Betters (outcomes). Performance reporting therefore does not identify deviations between planned and actual results. While FAO has an important role to play as custodian of relevant SDG indicators, the results data it generates do not provide a clear enough picture of how effective FAO's own activities have been, both for organisational learning and accountability purposes. This makes it more challenging for resource partners to move towards more flexible or programmatic forms of support. Addressing this will require FAO to rethink how it clusters its interventions around intended outcomes and to continue improving its enterprise resource planning systems.

Planned improvements in enterprise resource planning will also strengthen FAO's ability to monitor its performance. As noted in KPI 7, IT systems continue to be a limiting factor, especially at country- and project-level. FAO seeks to address this through the new project lifecycle management system PROMYS, but its development has been delayed and it is not expected to be available until 2026. Although FAO has taken important steps to strengthen its portfolio management, establishing a division dedicated to this task,³ these are yet to yield better performance monitoring.

Organisational learning is on a positive trajectory and FAO has continued to improve its evaluation function. There has been clear progress in evaluation and learning, especially since 2022, as described under KPI 8. FAO has modernised the evaluation function and improved its overall quality. These improvements were both timely and necessary. At the same time, the assessment mirrors the JIU Management and Administration Review (JIU, 2023) in finding that the evaluation function's operational, financial, structural and behavioural independence needs further strengthening. Moreover, FAO's capacity to address the backlog of pending evaluations and concerns over evaluation

3. The Project Support Division (PSS).

coverage and selection criteria should be improved in ways that respect the independence of the Office of Evaluation. Moving forward, there are now provisions in place to approach these challenges and ensure that evaluations are prioritised, that coverage is improved, and that the office of evaluation's role focuses on quality assurance rather than delivery. A new evaluation policy is expected in 2025.

There is also scope for FAO to improve the transparency of its budgeting and reporting, to build ownership of its (integrated) budget among members and demonstrate that it uses resources to deliver results effectively and efficiently. The JIU 2023 Management and Administration Review concluded that transparency and ownership of the budget by the organisation's members, as well as the accuracy in budgeting, need to be enhanced and that members need to be provided with an opportunity to reflect on the means necessary to attain the respective goals, including subjects such as the use of consultants and travel. FAO has embarked on a series of measures to improve its ability to map expenditure against its SF. Its Transparency Portal launched in June 2024, with a project dashboard for XB funding and technical cooperation projects (financed from the regular budget), is intended to improve visibility of its sources of funding and their destination. Further improvements to the granularity and transparency of its PWB in line with the recommendations made by the UN JIU, would further enhance consultations in governing bodies and member ownership.

The assessment also calls for further improvements in FAO's ERM system. The rapid growth in FAO's project portfolio has exposed the organisation to greater levels of strategic, political, operational and fiduciary risk, all of which heighten reputational risk. Hence, these developments necessitate more robust risk management systems. Over the past five years, FAO has indeed put in place the core architecture of an ERM system and worked towards building greater risk awareness into its management processes. With these efforts, FAO's approach to risk management is on a positive trajectory. However, the MOPAN assessment finds that risk awareness, while improved, remains low in certain areas, leading to inconsistent approaches to risk management. The JIU, the OIG and external auditors continue to report shortcomings in internal controls – notably with regard to ERM – which need addressing. The assessment found that, despite growing attention for the various risk categories in intervention design guidance, application remains a work in progress. The JIU recommended improving the design and effectiveness of FAO's ERM, such as programme monitoring and evaluation. It recommended that FAO submit an action plan to the Council by the end of 2025, through a joint session of the Finance Committee and the programme committee, that clearly indicates the roles and responsibilities in the design, implementation and monitoring of these processes.

While FAO has increased efforts on the PSEA in the last two years including putting in place its first PSEA strategy and making appointments at HQ, **much more is required to proactively mitigate the risk of SEA across both emergency and development programming** and to embed ownership of the issue beyond HQ. The current absence of such mitigations represents a key risk to FAO.

The MOPAN assessment has witnessed that FAO has embarked on a comprehensive set of organisational transformation efforts that are unfolding in parallel. The assessment team was struck by the complexity of the transformation process and the multiplicity of activities underway across HQ departments, regions, and country offices. At the same time, it observed that these reforms are being dealt with in a siloed manner, and that the dependencies and connections between them are not made explicit. There is no structure in place in FAO that manages the reforms holistically, on a day-to-day level that can steer and oversee a sequenced or synchronised approach supported with targeted investments, as recommended by the JIU report on change management (2019). **FAO would benefit from a dedicated team responsible for change management and business transformation, overseen by FAO's core leadership, supported by and operating in close dialogue with FAO's membership.**

**August 2024 –
Bamyan province,
Afghanistan**

Empowering women through beekeeping. Female farmers opening sealed honeycomb cells to make them ready for honey extraction.

Photo:
©FAO/Hashim Azizi



CONCLUSIONS

The transformation of FAO envisaged in its SF 2022-31, with its innovative strategic pathway and programmatic priorities, has been set in motion. FAO has embarked on many processes to ensure it can deliver this ambitious agenda, which have resulted in some clear improvements in organisational systems and capacities over the assessment period.

However, the rapid growth in FAO's project portfolio – a mark of high and growing demand for FAO's expertise – has created new and urgent challenges for the organisation. These include challenges around its ability to allocate its resources to emerging needs, and to secure predictable resources to strengthen corporate systems and capacities within country offices.

In the short term, one option to consider would be to bridge this gap with voluntary resources to advance the reform of decentralized structures and to continue strengthening corporate systems, such as project cycle management, accountability for results, and back-office responsibilities such as financial management, procurement, HR management and ERM.

In the longer term, however, sustainable solutions need to be found in dialogue with members to secure higher amounts of flexible voluntary contributions. FAO and its members may want to consider elaborating solutions such as those currently being piloted in other UN organisations, including a gradual increase of core resources or a replenishment model. The *quid pro quo* for this shift will need to be a higher degree of transparency, accountability, stronger results-based management, exemplary oversight mechanisms and more inclusive and consultative governance. It is only through a close dialogue and cooperation between the organisation and its members that progressive adaptation in both organisational systems and funding practices can become a reality, equipping FAO to respond to the growing demand for its services.

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DETAILED LOOK AT PERFORMANCE AREAS

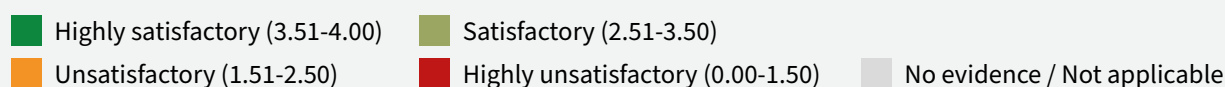




September 2023 – Usurufa Village, Papua New Guinea. Sweet potatoes come from a Benefit-sharing Fund training plot, overseen by a group of farmers and supported by the National Agricultural Institute of Papua New Guinea. The Benefit-sharing Fund is a programme by the FAO International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. Photo: © FAO / Russell Wai

This chapter provides a more detailed assessment of FAO's performance across MOPAN's KPIs in five performance areas – strategic management, operational management, relationship management, and performance management and results. The chapter lists the KPIs, their scores and ratings, and a brief summary of findings for each. The MOPAN performance scoring and rating scales are listed in Figure 5.

FIGURE 5. MOPAN PERFORMANCE SCORING AND RATING SCALE



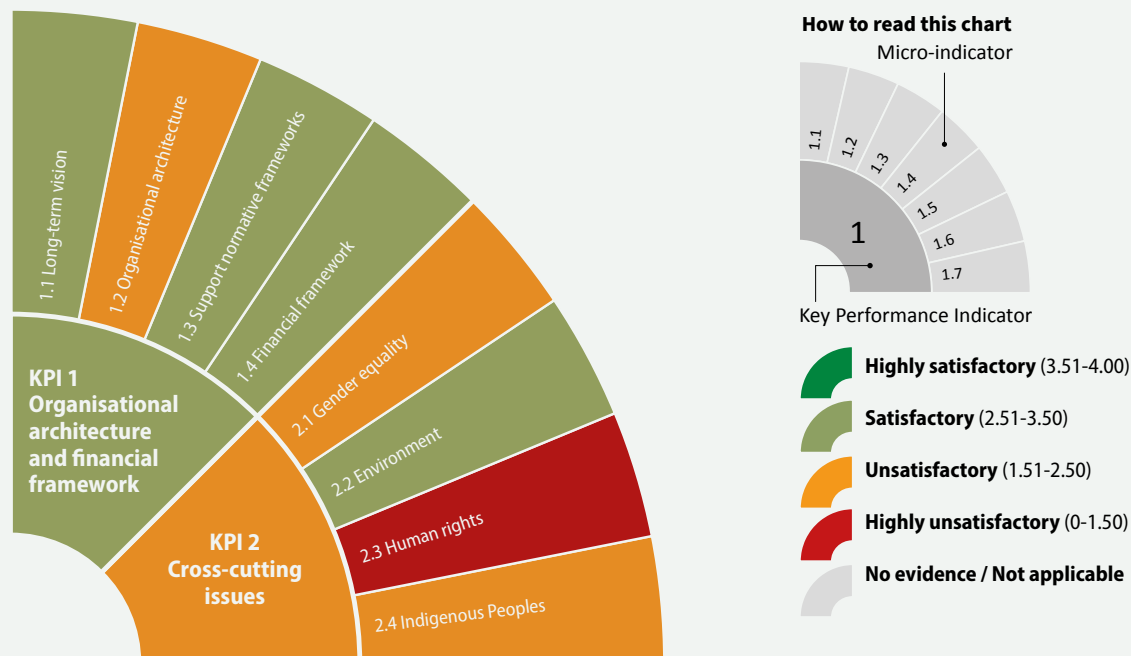
Source: MOPAN Methodology Manual, 2020 Assessment Cycle, http://www.mopanonline.org/ourwork/themopanapproach/MOPAN_3.1_Methodology.pdf

The assessment's key findings draw on information from the three evidence sources: document reviews, interviews and a partner survey, which are described in Chapter 4. Further analysis per micro-indicator (MI) and detailed scoring, as well as the full survey results, can be found separately in Part II: Technical and Statistical Annex of the MOPAN assessment of FAO (2024), and in an interactive format online*.

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Clear strategic direction geared to key functions, intended results and the integration of relevant cross-cutting priorities.

FIGURE 6. KEY FINDINGS ON FAO'S STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT



In line with its *Basic Texts*, FAO's work since 2010 must be guided by a SF prepared for a period of 10-15 years and reviewed every four years. The two SFs relevant to this assessment period are both anchored in FAO's long-term goals, vision and comparative advantages, but vary considerably in the strategic and programmatic priorities they set for FAO. The organisational changes required to implement these strategic shifts are not set out explicitly in the new SF 2022-31 or the MTP 2022-25, although the two-year PWBs address these to an extent.

* The interactive version of the Performance Rating Summary is available on the MOPAN website at <https://www.mopanonline.org/assessments/fao2024/index.htm>.

The SF 2022-31 is closely aligned to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Its corporate results framework is built around SDG targets and indicators, and FAO tracks progress on the SDGs it seeks to support through biennial Programme Implementation Reports, FAO uses a single, integrated budgetary framework that covers both its regular budget and extra-budgetary contributions. However, feedback from members was that the budget was insufficiently detailed to support full transparency. While the growing level of voluntary contributions has enabled FAO to expand its operations, the associated earmarking limits its ability to ensure that *all* priority areas are adequately funded. The planning and reporting cycle is clearly structured and members play an important role in terms of substantive contribution and oversight.

FAO’s performance in supporting global frameworks for cross-cutting issues is mixed. Its commitment to cross-cutting issues is well articulated in its thematic policy on gender (2020-30), its revised Strategy for Climate Change (2022-31) and associated action plan 2022-25, its Framework on Environmental and Social Management (FESM; 2022), and its *Policy on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples* (2010). FAO has integrated gender equality and climate change into the current SF and programming guidelines as a cross-cutting theme, although the most recent iterations of the guidelines do not include explicit targets. Human rights are not explicitly identified in the SF 2022-31 or MTPs, while tribal and indigenous peoples are mentioned but not explicitly identified as target populations. Evaluations have been critical of FAO’s mainstreaming of assessed cross-cutting issues. The lack of results targets makes it difficult to assess the extent to which FAO is achieving results through its programming and the extent to which action plans for gender, climate change, the policy on indigenous and tribal peoples, and the FESM are being mainstreamed across the organisation.

The strategic management performance area explores whether there is a clear strategic direction in place that is geared to key functions, intended results, and the integration of relevant cross-cutting priorities. This area is assessed through the two KPIs specified below:

KPI 1: Organisational architecture and financial framework enable mandate implementation and achievement of expected results.

Satisfactory	2.69
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In line with the Basic Texts, all of FAO’s work since 2010 must be guided by a SF prepared for a 10-15-year period and reviewed every four years. The SF is the overarching road map of the organisation, setting a shared vision on organisational priorities, negotiated between management and members. Both SFs covered in this assessment (2010-19, extended until 2021; 2022-31) contain a long-term programmatic vision based on FAO’s three global goals, and a results framework.

While FAO’s long-term global goals and vision have remained stable, the two SF covered in this assessment vary considerably in terms of strategic and programmatic priorities. The SF 2010-19 identified five strategic objectives (SO), which provided an organising framework for programme delivery. Each SO had corresponding outcomes and outputs and was linked to a number of SDGs and outcome / output indicators. The period 2020-21, which largely coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, saw the introduction of a revised strategic orientation, including several new perspectives and initiatives that were endorsed/approved by members in 2020. Notably, these prioritised the transformation to more efficient, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable agri-food systems for “better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life” leaving no one behind (the Four Betters). The 2022-31 SF was guided by a narrative that codified and elaborated upon these, introducing 20 PPAs: inter-disciplinary, issue-based technical themes, intended to guide the implementation of programmes. It includes an overarching corporate results framework, with outcome statements for each of the Four Betters and the 20 PPAs. The reach of the SF 2022-31 vis-à-

vis the SDGs appears to have been broadened, compared to its predecessor. FAO opted not to include performance targets for the Four Betters, nor for the 20 PPAs, instead emphasising the joint responsibility of the organisation and its members for achieving the corresponding SDG targets (see KPI 7 for further analysis).

FAO articulates its comparative advantages in terms of basic attributes (characteristics “intrinsic and in combination unique to FAO”) and core functions (“the critical means of action employed by FAO to achieve results”). Both were reviewed as part of the strategic planning exercise and remained largely consistent from one SF to the next, even though new/other priorities had been identified in response to changing policies (Agenda 2030), global and regional trends and developments.

Neither the 2022-31 SF nor the MTP 2022-25 lay out concretely the changes to FAO’s organisational characteristics needed to implement the change in strategic orientation. In that sense, the SFs and MTPs do not serve as strategic management tools, lacking concrete, operational statements about the need to realign resources and staffing behind new strategic objectives. To some extent, this also holds for the biennial PWB. PWBs contain detailed descriptions of programmatic priorities and resource needs, but operational decision points are limited to the appropriation of assessed contributions, which are fixed within a zero-growth budget and mostly already committed to cover fixed organisational overheads.

The planning and reporting cycle is highly structured and members play an important role in terms of substantive contribution and oversight, in accordance with their roles and responsibilities, as articulated in the FAO Basic Texts. This review process also incorporates the performance of interventions funded through VCs, and FAO’s management of these – including risk management at decentralised levels.

KPI 2: Structures and mechanisms support the implementation of global frameworks for cross-cutting issues at all levels, in line with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda principles.

Unsatisfactory

2.17

FAO has a policy on gender equality 2020–30, which recognises gender equality as essential to achieving FAO’s mandate. Gender has been integrated into the SFs and programming guidelines as a cross-cutting theme, although explicit targets on gender mainstreaming and results were dropped for the SF 2022-31 and PWB 2022-23. In addition, one PPA is dedicated to gender equality and rural women’s empowerment. FAO has a dedicated rural transformation and gender equality division providing support internally and to partners on gender issues, and there are 200+ gender focal points spread across the organisation. FAO complies with the UN System-wide Action Plan for Mainstreaming Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP). There are challenges at intervention level with prioritising and implementing gender mainstreaming and with ensuring adequate human resources. Moreover, it is currently not possible to track the allocation of resources to gender equality and women’s empowerment, while the lack of gender-disaggregated results data limits the evaluability of FAO’s programming.

FAO has improved its focus on climate change during the current assessment period with the adoption of its Strategy for Climate Change 2022-31, the associated FAO Action Plan 2022-25 for its implementation, and the adoption of the mandatory 2022 FESM. In the SF 2022-31, climate change is expressed through its focus on better environment, one of the four organisational Betters. FAO does not set itself targets for climate change but seeks to contribute to relevant SDG indicators. FAO is an increasingly important partner for international climate funds (vertical funds). Most of the funding for its climate-related work comes from earmarked VCs for a growing number of projects, which, as evaluations have stated, risks leading to a fragmentation of efforts and a focus on the short-term (see also the detailed technical annex KPI 9). The Office of Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environment leads the mainstreaming of the strategy within FAO, but no comprehensive assessments of how effective the new strategy and action are plan have taken place yet.

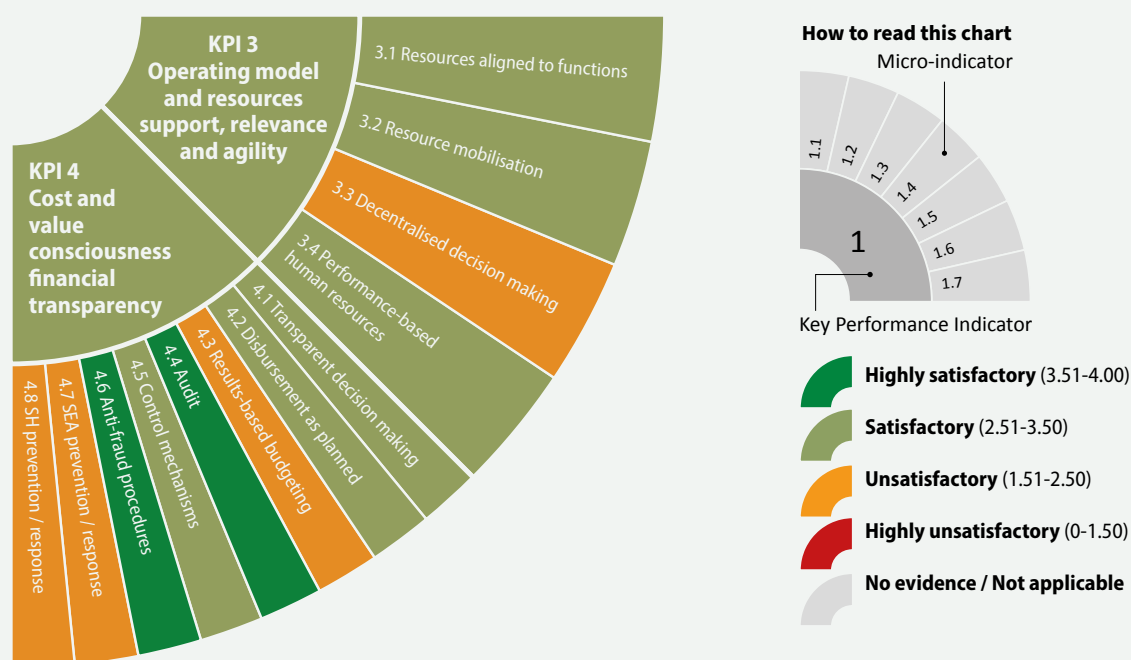
During the assessed period, FAO's approach to human rights / Leave No One Behind was largely implicit. The 2022 FESM represents FAO's clearest commitment to Human Rights. Key documents such as the SF 2022-31, the MTP 2022-25 and the PWBs do not explicitly reference Human Rights, nor are there organisational results targets. Rather, FAO's alignment to the SDGs which are underpinned by Human Rights, notably the Right to Food, provide the platform for embedding Human Rights across FAO. Overall, analysis of 64 FAO evaluations showed that Human Rights/a rights-based approach hardly feature in FAO's work.

FAO has a policy, guidelines and identified priorities on indigenous and tribal peoples in its workplans, but evidence of application is weak. FAO's current and former SFs make only passing reference to indigenous and tribal peoples. However, FAO does have an Indigenous People's Unit and participates in an Interdepartmental Working Group on Indigenous people. The 2022 FESM and earlier Environmental and Social Management Guidelines (ESMG) also explicitly cover indigenous and tribal people and set out related requirements for all programming. FAO's strategic results framework links indigenous and tribal people to SDG targets and indicators, and the 2024-25 Programme on Work and Budget identifies priorities for FAO on indigenous and tribal people. However, neither identify specific results targets for the organisation. Evaluations found that direct support is limited, that issues related to indigenous and tribal people had not been mainstreamed throughout FAO's work and that dedicated human and financial resources are lacking within the organisation.

OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT

The **operational management** performance area gauges to what extent the assets and capacities organised behind strategic direction and intended results ensure relevance, agility and accountability. This area is assessed through the two key performance indicators specified below.

FIGURE 7. KEY FINDINGS ON FAO'S OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT



As of 31 December 2023, FAO's total workforce stood at 15,639, an increase of 23% since December 2018. More than three-quarters or 80% FAO's workforce are based in decentralised offices. Aligning staffing with SF priorities

remains a recurrent challenge, due largely to lengthy recruitment periods, high vacancy rates and insufficient HR capacity. FAO does not have an up to date people strategy.

In response to new strategic priorities, several restructuring exercises were conducted between 2019-22, starting at HQ-level and progressively extended to regional and subregional offices. These have helped align the organisation with its strategic objectives and improved organisational coherence. However, the restructuring has not yet been extended to country offices, leaving FAO with significant capacity gaps, in areas such as project cycle management, results management and key back-office functions such as financial management and procurement. Moreover, the Office of the Inspector General reports weaknesses in internal governance structures and lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities and corresponding levels of accountability. Given the expanding role played by country offices in delivering FAO's growing project portfolio, this has resulted in a sharp rise in delivery risk. Management has recognised this challenge and developed plans to strengthen country offices. While well conceptualised, FAO's ability to implement its decentralisation plans is constrained by a zero-growth regular budget.

FAO recently completed its (internal) resource mobilisation action plan, intended to better align resource mobilisation efforts with the SF 2022-31. FAO has succeeded in increasing extrabudgetary funding and diversifying the funding base, notably from international climate funds and IFIs. FAO offers several opportunities for unearmarked funding, but in practice, these only generate 5% of the voluntary contributions' current volume.

FAO's budget is structured along thematic priorities. FAO applies what it calls an 'integrated budget' process, with *stable*, predictable levels of assessed contributions (a 'flat nominal budget'), and an *estimated* amount of variable voluntary contributions. In practice, these leave FAO with limited scope to allocate resources in accordance with its strategic priorities. Governing boards exercise detailed *ex ante* oversight on resource allocation of assessed contributions and proposed voluntary contributions. External audit and other external reviews certify that FAO meets required international standards for internal controls. Both FAO and its OAC provide comprehensive annual reports to Governing bodies, including on the monitoring of performance of FAO's internal controls *systems*. However, the JIU, external auditors, and the internal office of the inspector general continue to highlight shortcomings in terms of internal control *performance*, notably regarding ERM.

FAO has recently introduced its first dedicated PSEA strategy and is currently revising its policy on protection from SH. While relevant processes, mechanisms and resources are being developed/enhanced in both areas, more action is needed to foster trust among stakeholders and demonstrate tangible progress across all layers of the organisation.

KPI 3: Operating model and human and financial resources support relevance and agility

Satisfactory

2.78

As of 31st December 2023, the total number of FAO employees stood at 15 639, including 3 258 staff (22%) and 11 248 "affiliate workforce" (78%), i.e., consultants, contractors, national project personnel, national contractors and others. This represented an overall increase in the workforce of 2 938 compared to 31 December 2019, 160 of which were staff and the remaining 2 778 affiliate workforce. Of all employees, 19.5% are based in Rome. Of these, approximately two-thirds are funded through the regular budget and one third through voluntary contributions. In decentralised offices, where 80.5% of all employees are located, the ratio is reversed: 29.8% is covered through assessed contributions, and 70.2% through voluntary contributions. In terms of gender parity, 27% of staff at a level of D1 and above, and 47% of staff at a Professional (P1-5) level, were female, with an underrepresentation of females at the P5 and P4 levels. Despite high compliance rates, FAO's workforce performance management system is considered ineffective.

For many years FAO’s HR management function has faced significant challenges. Though progress has been made in some HR management areas, *inter alia*, lengthy recruitment periods and high vacancy rates continue to hamper the organisation’s ability to align its workforce with organisational priorities. This was confirmed by the UN Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) in the 2023 Management and Administration Review. Some improvements were made during the assessed period to the HR function in terms of staff capacity and reinstating the HR policy unit. Nevertheless, the organisation does not yet have an up-to-date HR management / People Strategy, purposefully aligning strategic workforce management with the SF, set within the context of FAO’s shifting business model and funding trends.

Over the years, the share of extrabudgetary resources in FAO’s total budget has increased. While bilateral voluntary contributions remained flat, multilateral, international climate funds and IFIs increased their contributions significantly, accounting for 50% in 2023. This growth in XB funding indicates FAO’s important and growing role as a partner in national climate action. However, it carries risks for FAO in the increasing projectisation and fragmentation of its global portfolio, and its inability to allocate financial resources in accordance with its thematic and geographic priorities. In particular, there have been sharp rises in emergency and resilience (accounting for 41% of FAO’s portfolio in 2023) and in climate action and more modest increases in most other PPAs. Four PPAs (BP4, BN2, BE2 and BL7) did not benefit from the increase in extrabudgetary funding and instead were underfunded vis-à-vis budget forecasts.

In response to new strategic priorities, several restructuring exercises were conducted between 2019 and 2024, starting at HQ-level. Interview evidence shows that these restructuring efforts are widely perceived as positive, helping to align the organisation with its strategic objectives and improved internal coherence. **However, the restructuring has not yet been extended to country offices, leaving FAO with significant capacity gaps,** given the growing role play by country offices in an expanding project portfolio. This has brought a need for greater capacity in areas such as project cycle management, accountability for results, and ‘back office’ functions such as financial management, procurement, human resource management and ERM. It also requires streamlining of business processes and accountability structures, to increase agility and delivery capacity. Gaps in these areas have led to sharp increases in delivery risk. Furthermore, FAO’s active participation in UN Development System reforms has increased the need for coordination and joint work with UN partners at the country level. Management has recognised these challenges and developed plans to strengthen country offices (APRC/24/11, 2023). While well conceptualised, FAO’s ability to implement these plans is constrained by a zero-growth regular budget. For the time being, the Office of the Inspector General reports that “the Organisation does not have a clear policy on decentralization or a sound process for determining the decentralised offices’ governance structure and capacity.” (OIG, 2023).

There are some weaknesses in internal governance structures and lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities and corresponding levels of accountability. FAO’s accountability policy and framework were last updated in 2020. They do not incorporate the organisational restructuring efforts of the past years, nor do they provide detail on the roles and responsibilities and levels of accountability at all four levels of the organisation, leading to weaknesses in several areas. More recently, several initiatives have been taken to tackle some of the observed shortcomings, notably the multi-year enterprise resource planning (ERP) project, the effectiveness of which will take time to emerge.

KPI 4: Organisational systems are cost- and value-conscious and enable transparency and accountability.

Satisfactory	2.91
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FAO’s budget is structured along thematic priorities. FAO applies what it calls an ‘integrated budget’ process, with *stable*, predictable levels of assessed contributions (a ‘flat nominal budget’), and an *estimated* amount of variable voluntary contributions. Resource allocation of assessed contributions is in accordance with FAO’s highest priority themes. The FAO Secretariat submits proposals to the Governing bodies for approval. As part of the budgeting process, FAO identifies areas of programmatic emphasis, de-emphasis, and realignment. The governing boards discuss the

integrated budgets and VC forecasts highlighted in the PWB documents and are informed about actual expenditures through the programme implementation reports (PIRs). However, with increasingly larger shares of earmarked XB funds, in practice, most resources are allocated through a process that does not involve the governing bodies.

FAO reports annually to the Finance Committee on budgetary performance and programme and budgetary transfers. Since the last MOPAN assessment, FAO has embarked on a series of measures to improve its systems to map different elements of expenditure to the SF. The most recent organisational budget aligns financial resources with strategic objectives/intended results of the current strategic plan but does not consistently tie these to output-level results. Nor do budget documents include clear linkages between cost and results to support results-based budgeting. However, there is evidence of improved costing of management and development results.

External audit or other external reviews certify that international standards are met at all levels, including with respect to internal audit. Between 2019 and 2024, FAO's leadership has demonstrated greater attention to and resourcing of internal control mechanisms. The updated internal control framework clearly outlines roles and responsibilities of all relevant stakeholders for internal control. These are complemented by supporting policies, tools and tracking systems. External auditors and FAO's OAC consider the internal control system to be in place and reported good progress in several areas such as ERM and fraud risk management. The JIU noted in 2023 that the OIG charter had been strengthened but highlighted the need to strengthen the independence of the inspector general and of its reporting function to the Finance Committee and the Council. Moreover, the JIU, OIG, and external auditors continue to report shortcomings in terms of internal control performance, notably with regard to ERM. OIG pointed to a need for (major) improvement in the implementation of FAO's internal controls systems, including in monitoring and reporting of risk management of business processes. Although several initiatives have been taken in recent years to increase risk awareness among the workforce and especially management, in general, it remains low, leading to inconsistent approaches and practices.

FAO has clear policies against fraud and other corrupt practices, and for whistle-blower protection. All employees must take part in mandatory online training on (i) ethics and integrity; (ii) fraud and other corrupt practices; and (iii) whistle-blower protection. Compliance rates improved between 2020-23, with more than 90% of staff and over 75% of non-staff attending.

Both the OIG and the OAC provide annual reports to FAO's governing bodies, including on the monitoring of performance of FAO's internal controls systems. These reports are publicly available. The OAC is generally appreciative of the progress made to prevent and detect fraud and corruption. Nevertheless, both the JIU and the OIG expressed concern about the backlog in investigations into cases of fraud and corruption, among others.

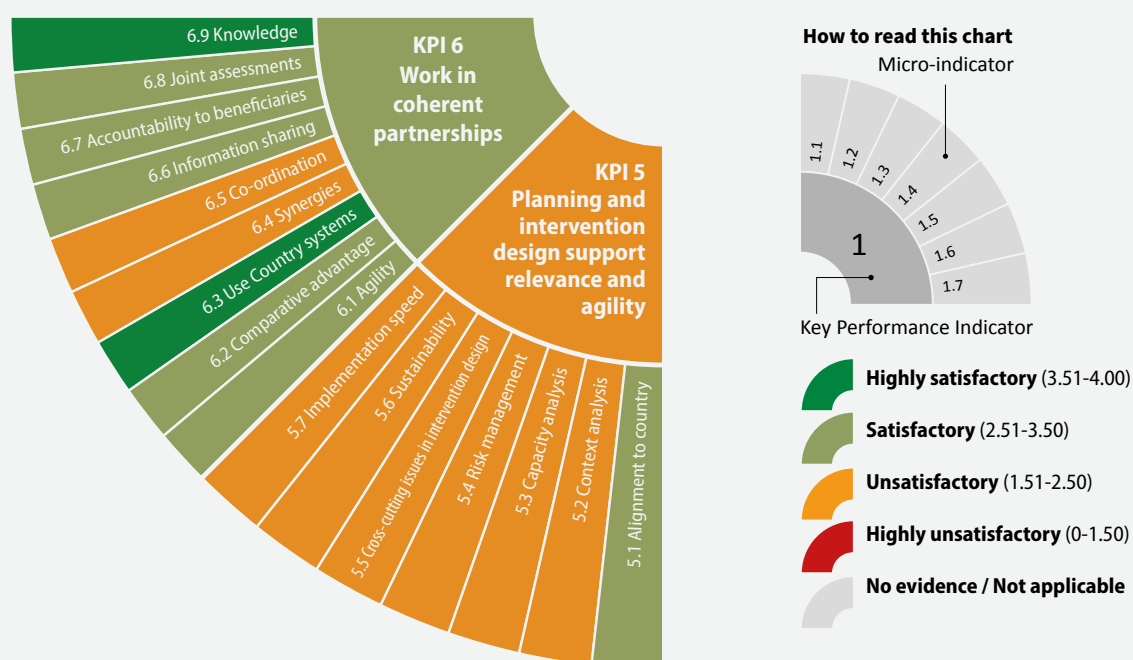
FAO has recently introduced its first dedicated PSEA strategy. It has defined roles and responsibilities, and uses action plans to support its implementation, although their functioning and interlinkages have yet to be clarified. Several of FAO's appointments on PSEA are recent but have already led to some promising efforts, including the initiation of a community of practice for the country focal points and alternates. FAO has clear standards in place that require its implementing partners to comply with its PSEA commitments but lacks the capacity to conduct due diligence and monitor compliance. The organisation has various complaints mechanisms which it can further improve and streamline, and ensure they are accessible, known, and that information flows to OIG. FAO Focal Points for SEA stressed how valuable inter-agency complaints mechanisms were at country level. The growing number of PSEA allegations suggests growing awareness of FAO's reporting system, although from a low base. The commitment of FAO's leadership to PSEA has yet to be felt in the daily work of country offices. FAO participates in and benefits from inter-agency collaboration on PSEA. FAO announced a victim-centred approach to SEA in its new policy, but this has yet to take hold; to date, no evidence of planning and implementation for this could be found.

To better protect its employees from SH, FAO is currently revising its policy, which is complemented by its 2021 code of ethical conduct. Its mechanisms to track progress are limited and its action plans mainly aspirational, although it has begun to strengthen its human resources dealing with the issue. Financial resources and the link between country offices (where most SH allegations tend to originate) and HQ with regard to SH efforts need clarifying. Training compliance rates are increasing, although completion rates among the affiliate workforce should be improved. While multiple mechanisms have been established to seek advice, pursue informal resolution or formally report SH allegations, FAO has yet to build the trust of its personnel in these systems, as many fear retaliation or believe the organisation would not act.

RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

The **relationship management** performance area looks at whether – and to what extent – the organisation has engaged in inclusive partnerships supported relevance, leveraged effective solution and maximised results. This area is assessed through the two KPIs specified below:

FIGURE 8. KEY FINDINGS ON FAO'S RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT



Regional conferences are a key instrument for shaping FAO's regional priorities and policies. These priorities and policies are then operationalised at the country level through the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), on the basis of which FAO CPFs are developed, in consultation with national counterparts (mainly governments). Although FAO seldom engages directly with targeted beneficiaries in its planning, their voices are reflected through the UNSDCF planning process.

Overall, at a corporate level, FAO is putting in place the foundations for stronger operational planning. FAO's project cycle management provides guidance in several areas, including mandatory requirements for analysis of context and capacity. FAO has also taken steps to strengthen its ERM, in response to recommendations from a 2019 audit. Since 2022, projects have been required to identify and register risks in the field programme management information system and the project risk log. Nevertheless, a 2023 audit and the evaluations reviewed by MOPAN

identify weaknesses with translating guidance into practice at project level. In practice, intervention designs and CPFs do not consistently address operational, strategic, political, reputation, sexual abuse, and other risks.

At a corporate level, FAO is committed to working in partnerships and knowledge generation and dissemination. There are dedicated strategies and human resources at corporate level to support working in partnerships, including with the private sector, as well as guidance and training regarding transformative partnerships. Nevertheless, the assessment found that FAO does not clearly articulate its comparative or collaborative advantage in relation to partnerships in project documents or in the CPFs. FAO faces shortcomings in its ability to monitor operational partners and it is unclear whether, and if so to what extent, FAO actively engages in joint monitoring. FAO has guidance on accountability to affected populations, primarily for humanitarian interventions, but evidence suggests that this is not being applied systematically.

There is insufficient robust evidence to assess the timeliness, utility, and quality of knowledge products. At country-level, the UNSDCF process should ensure coherence and encourage joint working. However, in practice, obstacles to working in partnerships and competition with potential partners remain, and little specific information is available on how leveraging of resources takes place.

KPI 5: Operational planning and intervention design tools support relevance and agility in partnerships.

Unsatisfactory

2.36

FAO strongly emphasises its regional conferences through its basic texts and SFs. The regional conferences are a key instrument through which regional priorities can shape FAO's priorities and policies. While the SFs for 2010-19 (extended to 21) and 2022-31 do not provide much detail on specific regional or country priorities, these are operationalised at country level through CPFs. The UNSDCF and the common country analysis (CCA) ensure close alignment with member countries and their priorities. FAO then bases its CPF on the UNSDCF. The CPF results framework template specifies country priorities to which FAO will contribute. The UNSDCF/CCA process involves consultation with a wide group of stakeholders and their representatives. Nevertheless, while FAO indicates that it undertakes a comprehensive analysis of beneficiary needs during the CCA process, specific detailed analysis is limited in CPFs and intervention designs.

Intervention designs are obligated to include a context analysis to guide the formulation of a project, but the requirements are not specified in detail, and in practice, the quality and depth of analysis is inconsistent. The 2023 programme evaluation report (PER) and project cycle audits find shortcomings in the application of contextual analysis. The project cycle and engagements with resource partners, e.g., as part of regular reporting, can offer points for reflection on changing contexts, but the 2021 audited accounts show that there is often limited documentation available on the response to such changes. CPFs undergo mid-term reviews where changing contexts can also be considered.

Capacity development is core to FAO's work, and project designs must elaborate on their approach to capacity development, to ensure sustainability. In practice, these assessments lack the necessary detail. The audit of the project cycle finds that the sections on capacity development are "largely irrelevant" to sustainability. A sample of reviewed project documents and CPFs shows that they provide mostly generic statements, without providing a detailed assessment of stakeholders' (including FAO's) capacity. FAO has addressed these 2019 audit findings by adopting a new project document template in June 2023 that places greater emphasis on capacity development, but the impacts of these changes will only be visible in future assessments.

At a corporate level, FAO has taken steps to strengthen its ERM, in response to recommendations from a 2019 audit. Nevertheless, a 2023 OIG audit and evaluations reviewed by MOPAN identify weaknesses with translating guidance into practice at project-level. Since 2022, projects have been required to identify and register risks in the field programme management information system and the project risk log. The guidelines on environmental and social management help to identify potential environmental and social risks at the project level. However, a review of a sample of project documents shows that intervention designs and CPFs do not consistently discuss operational, strategic, political, reputation, sexual abuse, and other risks. The 2022 FESM requires attention being paid to the cross-cutting themes relevant to this assessment (gender equality and women’s rights; environmental sustainability and climate change; human rights; and indigenous and tribal peoples) but it is too early to assess if this has led to improvements of their consideration in intervention designs. Prior to the FESM, FAO used the ESMG which were less explicit on human rights.

KPI 6: Working in coherent partnerships directed at leveraging and catalysing the use of resources.

Satisfactory	2.98
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FAO has a clearly expressed commitment to working in partnerships. On its dedicated partnerships website, FAO highlights seven partnership focus areas, namely academia and research institutions, civil society, family farming, private sector, resource mobilisation, South-South cooperation, and parliamentary alliances. Some partnerships are longstanding, while FAO also forms new partnerships to respond to changing circumstances. An example of a more recent partnership is the multi-stakeholder food coalition which is led by FAO and was established in the wake of COVID-19.

There are dedicated strategies and human resources at corporate level to support working in partnerships. The Partnerships and UN Collaboration Division (PSU) supports and guides existing/new partnerships at all levels of the organisation. The CCA/UNSDCF process is FAO’s main mechanism through which it engages in joint planning and ensures coherence across the UN. In practice, collaboration is hindered by competition among UN agencies, their different systems and processes, and high transaction costs.

FAO demonstrates a commitment to furthering development partnerships, as evidenced through its participation in South-South and triangular cooperation (SSTC). There is a dedicated SSTC strategy and SSTC is seen as key to delivering the 2030 Agenda. FAO has a dedicated SSTC division within the organisation. Three of the Four Betters in FAO’s SF 2022-31 make explicit reference to SSTC. There is also a guidance document for transformative partnerships accompanied by an online training module.

The various iterations of the guide to the project cycle all require attention to partnerships but provide limited detail on what this should entail. Project documents and CPFs do not clearly spell out FAO’s comparative or collaborative advantage in relation to partnerships, though FAO has reportedly taken steps to improve this at intervention level. The comparative advantages that are identified relate to FAO’s technical expertise in relation to food and agriculture. However, it is not clear how FAO prioritises human and financial resource allocation to areas of comparative or collaborative advantage. FAO does not consistently articulate the roles, responsibilities, and scope of partnerships, nor is it clear to what extent key business practices, such as joint monitoring and evaluation at intervention level, are coordinated with partners.

At project-level, FAO now has mechanisms in place to ensure accountability to affected populations, primarily for humanitarian interventions. The FESM are key to providing accountability to affected populations and there is also a “FAO in Emergencies Guidance Note: Accountability to Affected Populations” and an “Accountability to Affected Populations Toolkit”. Interviews suggest that not all staff possess a detailed knowledge of the FESM yet. Since the

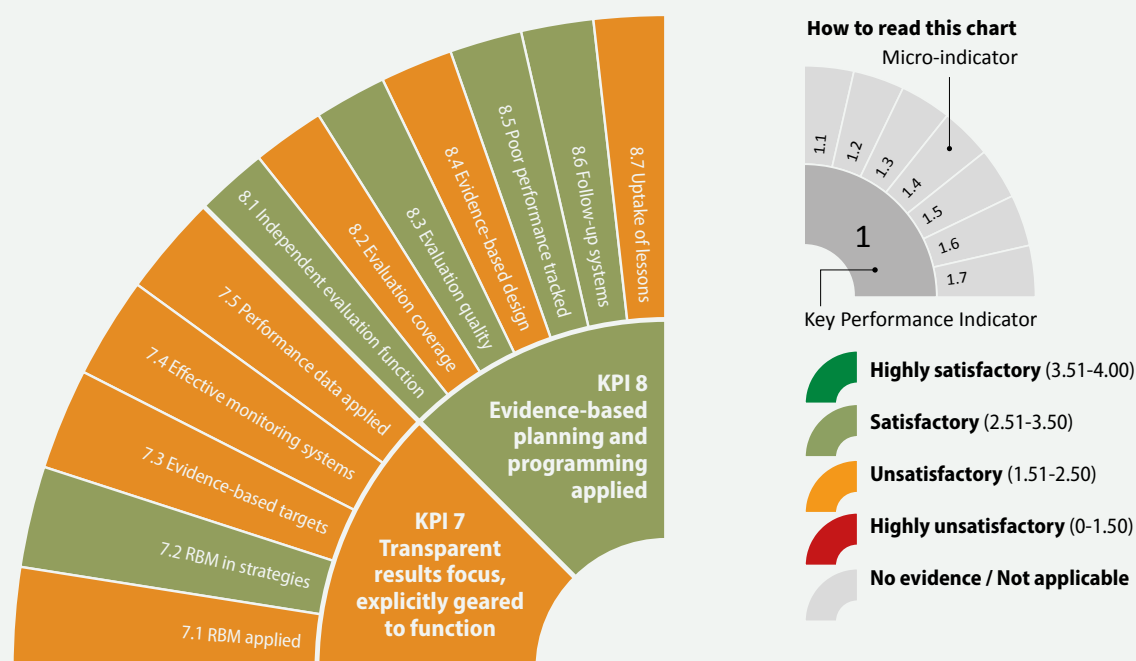
revision of the project cycle and the adoption of a new project document template in June 2023, accountability to affected populations and grievance mechanisms are now mandatory and based on the 2022 FESM, showing a positive direction of travel for FAO. Training materials are available, but it is unclear what percentage of FAO's workforce is making use of these. Accountability to beneficiaries did not appear to be a formal and explicit criterion for intervention approval until June 2023. In June 2024, FAO also updated its operational clearance form to mandate an assessment of the grievance redress mechanism.

FAO's commitment to generating and disseminating knowledge runs through its Basic Texts and the two assessed SFs. FAO has several well-known flagship publications, including *The State of Food and Agriculture*, and sees these publications as an important part of its normative work. Knowledge products and data generated by FAO are being utilised by its partners to inform action, even if the exact extent is not clear. There is insufficient robust evidence to assess the timeliness and quality of knowledge products, or if the format in which they are produced supports their utility.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

The **performance management** area assesses the existence of systems geared to managing and accounting for development and humanitarian results and the use of performance information, including evaluation and lesson-learning. This area is assessed through the two KPIs specified below.

FIGURE 9. KEY FINDINGS ON FAO'S PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT



The assessment finds some significant weaknesses in FAO's approach to results-based management. In the corporate results framework adopted under SF 2022-31, FAO has moved away from trying to identify its global results at outcome level. Instead, it tracks progress towards relevant SDG targets and indicators (FAO is the custodian agency for a number of these), for which it considers FAO, its members and others jointly accountable, rather than seeking to measure its own, specific contribution to their achievement. Because of this, the results data it generates do not provide a clear enough picture of how effective FAO's own interventions have been, to support organisational learning and accountability.

Over the assessment period, FAO has developed internal guidance for results-based management. However, its corporate monitoring system continues to face significant challenges. PROMYS, the new project cycle management system, is expected to improve the situation from 2026 onward. In parallel, the newly established project support division is developing a corporate monitoring framework.

In the past two years, in particular, there has been significant progress in FAO’s evaluation function. Policies and processes have been developed to modernise it and improve its quality orientation, adherence to normative standards, and the utility and rigour of evaluation designs and reports. However, a number of factors are putting strain on the evaluation function, including increased demand for evaluations within the organisation, an evaluation backlog, and challenges in HR management and procurement, affecting coverage and timeliness. The organisation has recently put in place measures to address these challenges and ensure that the evaluation function is properly prioritised and resourced. Meanwhile, concerns have been raised by the JIU and interviewees about the office of evaluation’s structural and behavioural independence. The forthcoming evaluation policy (2025) offers an opportunity to address this.

Clear lines of accountability and processes for identifying and tracking poorly performing interventions exist within FAO and are used on a regular basis. However, widespread delays in project implementation and changes in corporate reporting processes have made reporting on risks to project delivery less transparent, which is a cause for concern. Distillation and use of lessons learned is not mandatory in either the design or closure of CPFs and FAO interventions. As a result, opportunities are being missed to build on previous project and programme cycles, though there is some evidence that lessons are used in work planning at a strategic/corporate level.

KPI 7: Strong and transparent results focus, explicitly geared to function.

Unsatisfactory	2.41
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There is a clear corporate commitment to results-based management expressed in the SF 2010-19 and its accompanying organisational results and indicators. An internal guidance document, “Managing for Results at FAO” guides FAO personnel in managing for results, and an online module is available to help project task forces select the relevant SDGs to which projects contribute.

However, under the current SF (2022-31), FAO no longer measures outcomes directly attributable to its own operations or sets organisation-wide targets against which to measure its own performance. Whereas its SF 2010-19 sought to demonstrate FAO’s contribution at output and outcome level, the 2022-31 SF instead reports against SDG targets and indicators only, on the basis that FAO and its members are jointly accountable for their achievement. Other than the global SDG 2030 targets, no bespoke targets for FAO are identified in FAO’s SF, MTP and PWBs. The latter – the most operational of all three planning documents - also lacks output indicators. The two indicators that FAO uses to measure results at output level (which it defines as “results that are fully attributable to FAO”), namely the number of countries where FAO has supported PPA outcomes and relevant SDGs, and a biennial stakeholder survey, do not offer an adequate measure of the organisation’s global effectiveness.

While alignment with the SDGs is welcome, this approach leaves FAO without a means of identifying its own contribution to those results, for accountability and learning purposes. It therefore falls short of the basic requirements of results-based management. The assessment did not observe a mechanism through which project-level results are aggregated at the corporate level. Recent reporting aligned to the SF 2022-2031 included in the Mid-Term Synthesis Report 2022 and the 2022-23 PIR does not allow for the identification of deviations between planned

and actual results, as there are no results targets against the Four Betters. The CPF requires the inclusion of baselines, although it is optional in the development of new project interventions. Audit material suggests that baselines are often not used in practice.

At the country-level, planning and monitoring take place at CPF and project level. Results targets at the country level are derived from the relevant country UNSDCF document and are agreed between FAO, national government partners, and other development partners (including UN partners). All projects need to indicate how they will contribute to the CPF results (outputs and outcomes), and each project has its own results framework covering outputs and outcomes. However, project-specific outputs and outcomes are not aggregated up to the corporate level.

The corporate monitoring system faces significant challenges. Existing IT systems are a limiting factor, especially at country- and project-level. FAO recognises this and seeks to address it through the new Project Lifecycle Management System, PROMYS, but its development has been delayed and it is not expected to be available until 2026. In parallel, the project support division is working on developing a corporate monitoring framework.

FAO regularly reviews and presents performance data through the Programme Committee and Finance Committee. The extent to which planning documents are based on performance data is variable. Moreover, whereas FAO actively participates in global, regional and national dialogues, its contributions do not appear to be systematically informed by clear performance data. Country programme evaluations are not mandatory and as a result, many country offices do not have up-to-date evaluations that can inform the design of future CPFs or interventions, despite FAO's explicit recognition in its Programmes of Work and Budget that evaluations are an important component of results-based management.

KPI 8: Evidence-based planning and programming applied.

Satisfactory	2.53
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During the assessment period, and in the last two years in particular, FAO has made significant advances in its evaluation function. It has made clear progress on the development of policies and processes to modernise the evaluation function and improve its quality orientation, its adherence to normative standards, and the utility and rigour of evaluation design and reporting. The most notable developments since 2019 have included the appointment of a new director of evaluation in May 2022; the development and implementation of a decentralisation strategy; the delivery of a new interim strategy in March 2023; an updated rolling workplan of evaluations in December 2023, and the development of a new evaluation policy, due in 2025.

The findings of an analysis of a sample of evaluations undertaken during the assessment period suggest that these changes were timely. Consultations with key stakeholders in the evaluation function indicate that the direction of travel on evaluation is positive, with the new interim strategy and upcoming evaluation policy setting out clear steps for enhancing evaluation dissemination and quality assurance procedures, to promote better utility and rigour in FAO's evaluation activities.

Concerns have been raised by the JIU and interviewees about the structural and behavioural independence of the office of evaluation (OED). The JIU (JIU MAR, 2023) found that the evaluation function's operational, financial, structural and behavioural independence was insufficient and in need of further strengthening. The JIU pointed out that the links to the director-general (e.g. appointment, budget, and delegations of authority) were much stronger than those to the governing bodies. Similarly, it found that OED had insufficient direct access to the governing bodies and recommended that the Council review the evaluation charter to strengthen OED's independence. The forthcoming evaluation policy offers an opportunity to address these concerns.

The simultaneous presence of a number of constraining factors on OED's delivery capacity has created challenges in ensuring adequate coverage and timeliness of evaluations. These include an increased demand for evaluations within the organisation, a large evaluation backlog, and challenges in HR management and procurement of external evaluators. Moving forward, there are now clear provisions in place to approach these challenges and ensure that evaluations are prioritised, and that coverage is maintained. The newly developed "Intake" process now requires evaluation staff to consider the selection criteria for evaluations set out in guiding documents such as the evaluation charter and interim strategy alongside existing demands to ensure that the evaluation work plan is effectively prioritised. As a result, there is a strong coverage across the FAO's PPAs.

Clear lines of accountability and processes for identifying and tracking poorly performing interventions exist within FAO and are used on a regular basis. However, widespread delays in project implementation, and changes in the corporate reporting modality make reporting on risks to project delivery less transparent; this is a cause for concern. The latest round of yearly corporate reporting in the Mid-Term Synthesis Report 2022 does not contain a detailed indicator reporting on project delivery as in previous years and has been replaced with untransparent reporting on the percentage of projects at risk.

There is a clear commitment to the incorporation of lessons and best practices from evaluations at the corporate level. However, distilling and applying lessons is not a mandatory requirement in either the design or completion of FAO interventions. The organisation thus misses opportunities to build on previous project and programme cycles, and risks repeating mistakes. Similar opportunities are being missed in the design of CPFs, though there is some evidence of use of lessons in work planning exercises at a strategic/corporate level. Evaluations generally point to weaknesses in project monitoring data which prevent the uptake of lessons learned. In addition, CPFs and country annual reports do not contain a discussion of lessons learned in the majority of instances.

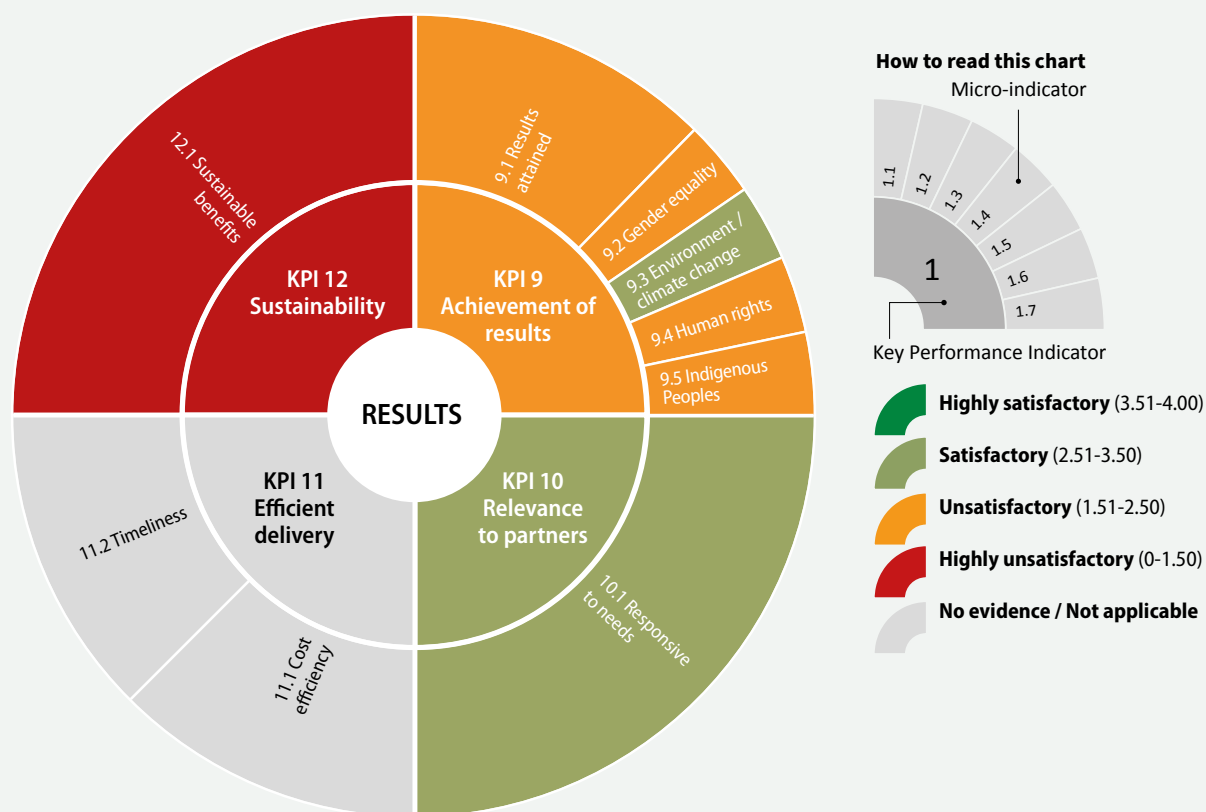
RESULTS

The **results performance** area explores to what extent relevant, inclusive, and sustainable contributions to humanitarian and development results are achieved in an efficient manner. This area is assessed through the four KPIs specified below:

Box 3. Limitations in assessing FAO against MOPAN's results indicators (KPIs 9-12)

The assessment of KPIs 9-12 on results is constrained by limited evaluative evidence. For the period under review, comprehensive overviews of *corporate-level* results on relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability were not available; FAO had commissioned no independent external evaluations of this nature. To determine FAO's achievement of development and humanitarian results, the assessment drew on 35 evaluations, reviews and audits, evaluation synthesis report, as well as 14 country annual reports. PERs present a number of narrative-focused examples of FAO success but lack consolidated results at output or outcome levels either for FAO as an organisation, or for each of the five regions.

FIGURE 10. KEY FINDINGS ON FAO'S RESULTS AREAS



The assessment found mixed evidence of FAO's effectiveness. GEF Terminal/Cluster evaluations highlighted the results that FAO achieves, even in operationally challenging conditions. There is evidence that FAO can adapt to changing operational contexts. The Covid-19 evaluation concludes that FAO was seen to be adaptive to the changed operational context. Nevertheless, the terminal evaluations (conducted by FAO), other evaluations conducted by FAO, PERs, regional synthesis and OIG reports continuously highlight a range of organisational and programmatic issues hampering performance, including the lack of monitoring data, fragmentation of interventions, poor sustainability, delays due to lengthy procurement and recruitment processes, and poor design.

FAO states in the SF 2022-31 that it is contributing to all SDGs, and whilst it is recognised that the SDGs are interlinked, there is limited evidence to show whether its stronger alignment with the SDGs has led to greater effectiveness in the delivery of the "core" FAO SDGs, including SDG 2. The evaluations included in this assessment have assessed the contribution of FAO to SDGs 2, 6, 13 and 14. These evaluations and related interviews showed that there was limited evidence to demonstrate FAO's contribution to the achievement of its strategic goals (see KPI 9 below).

On **relevance**, the development of the CPF in line with the UNSDCF is increasing the relevance of FAO's work to the country (as both the UNSDCF and the CPF must be agreed with the national government) but the evidence of FAO's engagement with beneficiaries at the grass-roots level and along agri-food value chains - including the private sector - is limited. Here too, increased fragmentation of the portfolio is seen as reducing the relevance of FAO interventions. Evidence of direct engagement with beneficiaries in country is also limited, as is the evidence from evaluations and other sources on results around human rights (see KPI 10).

Regarding **efficiency** (KPI 11) of all the documents that were analysed for this MOPAN assessment, only two evaluations reflected on efficiency. Consequently, the assessment was unable to score and rate the efficiency of FAO's delivery of results.

On **sustainability**, the analysis of the selected evaluations and synthesis reports on matters of sustainability and sustainable capacity building shows that there is generally a low probability that interventions will be sustainable. The evidence points to several interrelated areas (including fragmentation, capacity shortfalls of FAO and its partners, and lack of exit strategies) that are currently hampering the sustainability of FAO interventions.

KPI 9: Development and humanitarian objectives are achieved, and results contribute to normative and cross-cutting goals.

Unsatisfactory

2.12

Evidence of the extent to which FAO has achieved its results is mixed. Despite achieving or exceeding its projected *output* targets, FAO's contribution to the *outcomes* under the five SOs of the previous sustainable framework was reported as being highly variable between 2018-21, according to the PIRs for 2018-19 and 2020-21. No evidence of attribution or plausible corporate contribution to SDG performance was available in the PIR 2022-23. This is because the corporate results framework 2022-31 does not report corporate-level achievements against corporate targets (see KPI 7). It is thus not possible to reliably assess FAO's corporate results against the new SF.

Several of the project level evaluations that were sampled and assessed do highlight FAO's achievements. GEF Terminal/Cluster evaluations identify FAO's achievements and positively evaluate its adaptability to changing operational contexts. An evaluation of SDG 14 found that FAO had improved the governance of fish stocks by building partner capacity in collating and analysing data and managing fisheries, and an evaluation of South-South technical co-operation found that most outputs had been achieved, to name but a few. FAO's contribution to the SDGs appears to be broadening.

Nevertheless, some evaluations, including the SDG contribution analysis, note concerns around effectiveness. The PERs and regional synthesis reports for the assessment period partly attributed shortcomings to fragmentation and the short-term nature and project focus of many of the interventions, and to the absence of a programmatic approach set within a clear strategic policy or analytical framework and focused on the SDG targets in that country. Modifications aimed at creating a stronger programmatic/portfolio-based approach have not yet been evaluated.

While FAO does achieve results around individual interventions, there is little attention to measuring and reporting on the effectiveness overall of its work in a country i.e., its coherence with other development or humanitarian actors and scale-up strategies with governments and stakeholders. Even as individual interventions are seen as meeting the needs of the member state, FAO's ability to demonstrate the relationship between an intervention and achievement of the targets for the key SDGs that a member state is focused on and that relate to FAO's mandate, appears to be weakening. Meanwhile, PERs consistently find that monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems do not enable systematic reporting. Country offices have limited capacity with respect to M&E and focus rather on project delivery in line with funding agency requirements.

There is also limited attention paid to the collection of disaggregated data: only 3 out of 21 evaluations or evaluation syntheses rate this as satisfactory, and 7 out of 21 as highly unsatisfactory.

The assessment also examines **FAO's contribution to normative or cross-cutting goals.**

Gender equality is mentioned in the sampled evaluations that were assessed. The approach is primarily focused on the numbers of women who participate in interventions rather than the stronger approach of gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE). Due to monitoring challenges, limited disaggregated data are available. This restricts the measurement of effectiveness over time. Still, the analysis of the sample of documents shows that results are mixed: FAO's self-reporting on GEWE is positive, while only a limited number of countries report against BL1 Gender Equality and Rural Women's Empowerment with more reporting explicitly on BL2 Inclusive Rural Transformation. Independent evaluations' attention to GEWE varies significantly: Only 4 out of the 21 assessed evaluations or evaluation syntheses paid satisfactory attention to gender equality issues, 14 paid limited / some attention, 2 were gender blind and 1 paid no attention at all. The SDG 2 evaluation indicated that approaches to gender equality were weak, but this was seen as stronger in the SDG 13 evaluation – although no quantitative data on outcomes were included.

Currently, environmental sustainability is often rated as not highly likely in OED evaluations, including GEF cluster evaluations. Independent evaluations conclude that understanding and identifying the linkages and trade-offs for the different challenges of environmental sustainability and climate change and their role in agri-food systems transformation remains limited at the intervention level in project design, in monitoring (including potentially common indicators and associated methodologies for measurement) and in related capacity building. Monitoring and hence evaluative work are often focused on quantitative measurement only. GEF cluster evaluations recognise that work on building environmental sustainability in complex local contexts is challenging and FAO is not alone in developing approaches that acknowledge the dynamic nature of this complexity and its effect on achieving, and measuring, environmental sustainability. With regard to normative/multilateral environment agreement (MEA) engagement, FAO is a highly engaged organisation with a range of MEAs and their related processes; however, the ability to evaluate the effectiveness of this high-process oriented work remains a challenge.

There is limited attention to human rights in evaluations and other documentation from operational interventions. More than half of the evaluations assessed have no mention of human rights, while 8 were classed as having limited or no contribution to the attainment of human rights. There are examples of successful, mainly normative work on human rights and the environment. These include the “significant work upholding the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), specifically, on women's rights in the ownership, acquisition, management, administration, enjoyment and disposition of land (Article 16(1)(h)), as well as non-discrimination in rural areas, and women's participation in and benefit-sharing from rural development (Article 14(2)).” However, the PER 2021 noted that OED evaluations had found that its work to support the most vulnerable groups required improvement. Human rights are barely mentioned in the regional syntheses, although there is more recent attention to youth as a group.

FAO is increasing its attention to issues that affect indigenous peoples (IP), including the right to free prior informed consent (FPIC). FAO has contributed to national normative work on IPs. Regarding the use of SDG 2 Voluntary Guidelines (used as an example for the Voluntary Guidelines on Gender and Tenure - VGGT) and the Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines (SSF), evidence suggests that progress is being made but that it needs to be more systematic. However, of the 21 evaluations or evaluative syntheses assessed, only one registers “some contribution” while all others are either unsatisfactory, highly unsatisfactory, or provide no mention of the effect of FAO interventions on IP's, even in countries where there are recognised IP. The SDG 13 evaluation includes a specific recommendation (Number 8) on IP. The SDG 14 evaluation notes that there is no use of FPIC for IP and use / management of resources within the SDG 14 portfolio of work.

KPI 10: Interventions are relevant to the needs and priorities of partner countries and beneficiaries as the organisation works towards results in areas within its mandate.

Satisfactory	3.00
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The development of the country programming framework (CPF) in line with the UNSDCF is increasing the relevance of FAOs work to the country (as both the UNSDCF and the CPF must be agreed with the member state) but the evidence of FAO’s engagement with beneficiaries at the grassroots level and along agri-food value chains - including the private sector - is limited. The CPF is the key modality for the design of country programmes and provides the critical link to corporate reporting. However, an analysis of a sample of CPFs showed that they do not provide clear targets. Existing projects and programmes are not always well identified. There is a lack of attention to how interventions already being implemented will link to any new CPF outputs (especially if the CCA has been modified). Results frameworks from interventions may be modified over time (with financing agency, government and other stakeholder agreement) to enable FAO to align with the SF 2022-2031 and to adapt to ongoing evidence of success if available.

FAO does not present reviews of CPF achievements for public consumption; lessons, including those from FAO’s own OED “contribution” analysis, are rarely available for learning purposes. Evidence of direct engagement with beneficiaries in country is limited, based on the evaluation evidence. Similarly, there is limited evidence from evaluations and other sources on results around human rights – including Leave No One Behind (LNOB) and the most vulnerable including people living with disabilities. There is some evidence (GEF Cluster) that FAO and partners (including IFAD) have undertaken work with pastoralist communities that includes an economic analysis and concludes that the work is effective even in situations of low infrastructure and weak policy environments. Normative work around land tenure is evaluated as positive – including for women and indigenous peoples –but this has yet to be institutionalised in many countries.

FAO’s collaboration with other UN agencies and partners is well respected – not least for its convening power and technical expertise. Evaluations point to the relevance of aligning work with other agencies and partners across SDGs as a way to increase performance, e.g., of water resource management and agriculture, as well as understanding the relationships between pollution to/from agricultural intensification and the contextual ‘trade-offs’.

May 2022 – Lodz,
Poland

A modern tractor on
a farm in Walewice.
Photo: © FAO /
Radostaw Jozwiak



FAO’s emergency and resilience interventions are seen as relevant to the needs of beneficiaries, although more focused work with communities is needed. The Mid Term Review Synthesis Report 2022 highlights a high level of trust in the FAO emergencies data that this is leading to an increase in the emergency response by FAO in key contexts. The PER (2023) raises the issues around strategic partnerships in emergencies and the need for more focused work with communities and their organisations to support emergency & resilience operations. The FAO Cluster Evaluation of Cameroon, Chad, Mali, and Niger referenced in the PER 2023 shows that even in the same programmes, the results of community-based work can have very different consequences if not finalised in a sensitive manner.

Few evaluations considered the effect of the uptake of normative work by member states. Those that did concluded that FAO’s normative work had provided important frameworks for the development of national and local policies and programmes.

Several evaluations and the OED regional synthesis regard portfolio fragmentation as reducing the relevance of the outputs achieved. This affects both partner countries and beneficiaries who are not able to access/reap the benefits of innovations. Fragmentation also affects the ability to mainstream gains, e.g. GEWE or environmental sustainability.

KPI 11: Results are delivered efficiently.

Of the sample analysed for this MOPAN assessment, only two evaluations reflected on efficiency matters. Consequently, the assessment was unable to score and rate the efficiency of FAO’s delivery of results.

KPI 12: Results are sustainable.

Highly unsatisfactory	1.00
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The analysis of the selected evaluations and synthesis reports on matters of sustainability and sustainable capacity building shows that there is generally a low probability that FAO’s interventions will be sustainable.

One of the central challenges is FAO’s reliance on a project-based approach rather than a more cohesive programmatic strategy. OED documents such as the regional syntheses and PERs highlight that this project modality



often leads to fragmented interventions, making it difficult to ensure coherence, continuity and scalability beyond the project's lifespan. This lack of coherence between projects leads to inefficiencies and prevents the establishment of a more strategic approach that could support long-term sustainability. This fragmentation, particularly in LDCs, LLDCs and SIDs, led to an insufficient facilitation of results monitoring and decision-making, further weakening the sustainability of these interventions.

In addition, many FAO projects are implemented without a clear exit strategy, which leaves countries without the guidance or resources needed to continue the interventions independently. While good project designs are acknowledged as foundational for achieving results, these alone are not sufficient to guarantee sustainability without mechanisms for long-term support and scaling. A lack of planning around how results will be sustained or scaled by local stakeholders is consistently identified as a major gap in FAO's project designs. For instance, programmes in Morocco, Madagascar, and Bolivia were found to be fragmented and poorly integrated into national systems, limiting their ability to sustain outcomes.

Successful sustainability depends heavily on partnerships, but FAO's collaborations with governments and private sector actors are often insufficient. FAO frequently engages in local partnerships rather than national ones, limiting its ability to influence policy and create enabling environments for long-term sustainability. For example, in protracted crisis settings such as Yemen, FAO's water management projects lacked a clear long-term vision and funding mechanism, resulting in limited benefits beyond the project's duration.

Regarding FAO's emergency and resilience work, the "Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the humanitarian-development-peace nexus 2014-2020" (FAO, 2021) highlighted that FAO's work in politicised conflict environments had suffered from the lack of clear policies and approaches. Since then, FAO has improved its policies and use of data for evidence-based programming. There are some early signs from Afghanistan that the approach of agricultural aid as humanitarian aid is reducing food insecurity even in times of drought and wider complex emergency situations.

Normative work is a core function of FAO; its convening power and technical competence are highly appreciated within global fora and by member states. Yet FAO does not yet invest much effort in monitoring, evaluating and learning from the diverse and normative and the standard setting work it conducts. Lack of result documentation and monitoring and issues of attribution of change – including FAO's contribution leads to a scarcity of data on sustainability (of outputs, outcomes and processes with stakeholders) in what is recognised by FAO as normative work. While the SF 2022-31 states that "normative aspects" will be linked with output indicators and outcomes of the PPAs, how this would be done is not clear. FAO's PIRs do not demonstrate this. Assessing the sustainability of normative work (policies, legal frameworks, budget allocations, projects, programmes etc) is not currently possible as a result. FAO's self-reporting lacks details of which normative processes, products or countries are referred to in relation to actual achievements. The SDG 14 contribution analysis evaluation raises an important point about the need for normative documents to be regularly updated with new scientific evidence, and for greater uptake and use of FAO's extensive normative work by member states.

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ABOUT THE ASSESSMENT





September 2024 – Lake Titicaca, Bolivia. In the foreground, a variety of potatoes are displayed on a colorful textile. In the background, a villager of the farming community of Huatapampa stands in front of the sign of an FAO project to promote better production of potatoes in the region. Photo: © FAO / Max Valencia

THE ASSESSMENT APPROACH

The approach to MOPAN assessments has evolved over time to adjust to the needs of the multilateral system. The latest iteration, the MOPAN 3.1 methodology, has been used in all MOPAN assessments, including this one, since its endorsement by MOPAN members in early 2020 (MOPAN, 2020).

This assessment applied the standard MOPAN 3.1. methodology with some modifications to reflect FAO's mandate, operating model, and context.

- MI 2.4 was added. It caters for the inclusion of additional cross-cutting issues where relevant, considered the position of indigenous and tribal peoples.
- MI 4.1: For this MI, “allocation to partners” was interpreted as allocation to FAO entities (core leadership, offices, centres, divisions, supporting entities, and decentralised entities). Generally speaking, FAO works with financial partners but does not allocate funds to partners.
- MI 4.2: This MI was interpreted as referring to internal disbursement only, rather than disbursement to partners. This is because disbursements to partners are made by donors directly to project holders, without passing through HQ.
- KPI 5: Special attention was given to the extent whereby Normative Work is incorporated in planning and intervention design tools.
- MI 9.5: Additional cross-cutting issues: special attention was given to FAO's normative frameworks for indigenous and tribal peoples.

Moreover, the assessment framework incorporated MOPAN guidance on COVID-19, in particular.

- How FAO has leveraged its internal processes to respond to COVID-19 in an agile, flexible way.
- The extent to which risk management frameworks contributed to FAO's preparedness to respond to the crisis.
- How COVID-19 has been reflected in FAO's strategies, operations and results targets.

In consultation with FAO, a sample of 14 countries was selected based on an analysis of the current FAO operational countries (see Table 4). Evidence was collected through all three lines of evidence on/from these sample countries, alongside organisation-wide evidence.

TABLE 4. COUNTRY SAMPLE

Country contexts from which evidence was used alongside organisation-wide evidence

	REGION	COUNTRY
1	RAF – Africa	Kenya
2	RAF – Africa	Zimbabwe
3	RAF – Africa	Democratic Republic of the Congo
4	RAF – Africa	Nigeria
5	RAF – Africa	Lesotho
6	RAP – Asia and Pacific	Pakistan
7	RAP – Asia and Pacific	Lao PDR
8	RAP – Asia and Pacific	Solomon Islands
9	REU – Europe and Central Asia	Türkiye
10	REU – Europe and Central Asia	Ukraine
11	RLC – Latin America and Caribbean	Haiti
12	RLC – Latin America and Caribbean	Nicaragua
13	RNE – Near East and North Africa	Yemen
14	RNE – Near East and North Africa	Kyrgyzstan

NOTE: For more detail on the selection criteria and reflections applied in choosing this sample, please consult the Inception Report of the FAO assessment (MOPAN, 2023)

**August 2024 –
Chereponi, North-
East Region, Ghana**

Chef Fatama Binta and FAO are empowering women farmers through fonio cultivation, processing, and selling. Fatama talks to local women farmers about how a fonio machine will speed up processing and how it operates.
Photo: © FAO/
Fanjan Combrink



Table 5 lists the performance areas and KPIs used in the FAO assessment.

TABLE 5. **PERFORMANCE AREAS AND KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

Performance Area	KPIs
Strategic management	KPI 1: The organisational architecture and the financial framework enable mandate implementation and achievement of expected results
	KPI 2: Structures and mechanisms support the implementation of global frameworks for cross-cutting issues at all levels
Operational management	KPI 3: The operating model and human and financial resources support relevance and agility
	KPI 4: Organisational systems are cost- and value-conscious and enable financial transparency and accountability
Relationship management	KPI 5: Operational planning and intervention design tools support relevance and agility within partnerships
	KPI 6: Partnership working is coherent and directed at leveraging and/or ensuring relevance and the catalytic use of resources
Performance management	KPI 7: The focus on results is strong, transparent and explicitly geared towards function
	KPI 8: The organisation applies evidence-based planning and programming
Results	KPI 9: Development and humanitarian objectives are achieved, and results contribute to normative and cross-cutting goals
	KPI 10: Interventions are relevant to the needs and priorities of partner countries and beneficiaries, and the organisation works towards results in areas within its mandate
	KPI 11: Results are delivered efficiently
	KPI 12: Results are sustainable

Source: MOPAN 3.1 Methodology Manual, 2020 Assessment Cycle.

APPLYING MOPAN 3.1 TO FAO

Lines of Evidence

This assessment relied on three lines of evidence: a document review, a partner (online) survey, and staff interviews and consultations. The assessment team collected and reviewed a significant body of evidence.

A document review: This comprised publicly available documents as well as guidelines and policies that are “current and in force”. They were limited to those in the final form (not draft versions), recognised by management, and available in English. The assessment team reviewed a total of 771 documents, all of which are referenced in the technical and statistical annex (Part II of the assessment report).

An online survey: External partners, spread across six different stakeholder categories (governing body/board member; financing partner; implementing partners and recipients of financing or technical assistance; peer organisations/coordinating partners; knowledge partners and parliamentarians) were sent an online survey. A total of 314 stakeholders responded to the survey, which was conducted for eight weeks from late December 2023 until mid-February 2024. Key survey results are available in the technical and statistical annex (Part II of the assessment report) and on the MOPAN website in an interactive format.

Interviews and consultations: the assessment team undertook extensive consultations in both the inception and data collection phases of the assessment. The team engaged with a total of 35 stakeholders during inception interviews and conducted 57 staff group interviews during data collection with a total of 112 FAO staff.

METHODOLOGY AND SCORING

The approach to scoring and rating under MOPAN 3.1 is described in the 2020 Methodology Manual (MOPAN 2020), available on the MOPAN website. Each of the 12 KPIs contains MIs, which vary in number. A KPI rating is calculated by taking the average of its constituent MI ratings.

Scoring of KPIs 1-8









The scoring of KPIs 1-8 is based on an aggregated scoring of the constituent MIs. Each MI contains several elements, which vary in number, representing international good practice. Taking the average of the constituent scores per element, a score is then calculated per MI. The same logic is pursued for aggregating to the KPI level to ensure a consistent approach. Taking the average of the constituent scores per MI, an aggregated score is calculated for each KPI.

Rating scales

Whenever scores are aggregated, rating scales are used to translate scores into ratings summarising the assessment across KPIs and MIs. The rating scale used under MOPAN 3.1 is shown below.

Scoring of KPIs 9-12

MOPAN's approach is to base scoring of KPIs 9-12 on a meta-analysis of evaluations and performance information.

 Highly satisfactory (3.51-4.00)	 High evidence confidence
 Satisfactory (2.51-3.50)	 Medium evidence confidence
 Unsatisfactory (1.51-2.50)	 Low evidence confidence
 Highly unsatisfactory (0.00-1.50)	
 No evidence / Not applicable	

A score of “N/E” means “no evidence” and indicates that the assessment team could not find any evidence but was not confident about whether or not evidence was to be found. The team do not assume that “no evidence” necessarily means that the element is not present (which would result in a zero score). Elements rated N/E are excluded from any calculation of the average. A significant number of N/E scores in a report indicates an assessment limitation (see the Limitations section below). A note indicating “N/A” means that an element is considered “not applicable”. This usually owes to the organisation's specific nature.

It should be noted that the scoring and rating of KPIs 11 and 12 was hampered by a lack of pertinent evidence:

KPI 11: Of the sample of documents analysed for this MOPAN assessment, only two evaluations reflected on efficiency matters. Consequently, the assessment was unable to score and rate the efficiency of FAO's delivery of results.

KPI 12: The score for this KPI was based solely on evidence regarding development interventions undertaken at the member state level, due to a lack of evaluative evidence on the results achieved with emergency and resilience interventions and FAO's normative work.

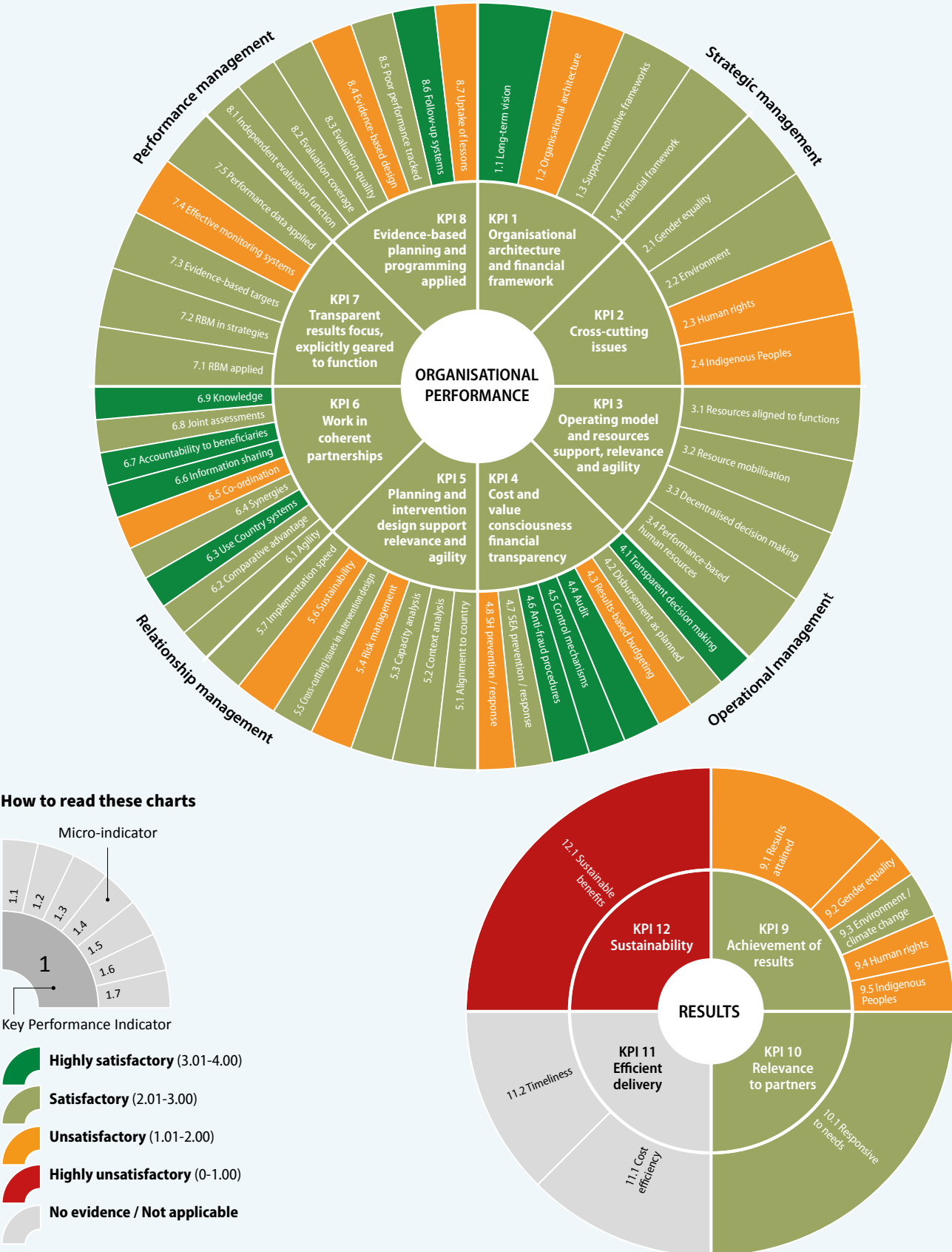
Changes to MOPAN's rating system

MOPAN's methodology is continuously evolving, and a notable change since the last assessment of FAO concerns how ratings (and their corresponding colours) are applied based on the scores at MI and KPI levels. Compared to the pre-2019 rating scale, applied (Figure 11), the threshold for each rating has been raised to reflect the increasing demands of organisational performance in the multilateral system. The underlying scores and approach to scoring are unaffected.



June 2024 – İdrisoba village, Khachmaz Rayon, Azerbaijan. Harvest time at Vahid Mammadaliyev's hazelnut farm. Photo: © FAO / Javid Gurbanov

FIGURE 11: FAO PERFORMANCE RATING SUMMARY (previous rating scale)

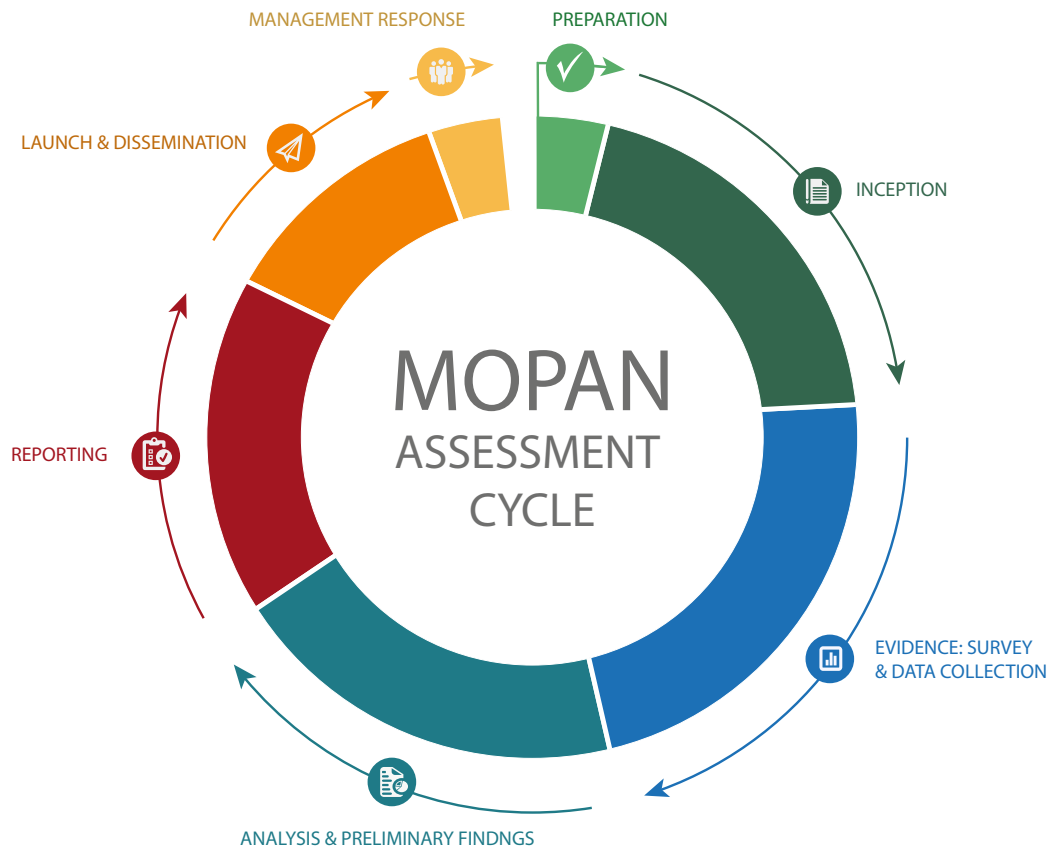


ASSESSMENT PROCESS

TABLE 6. MOPAN ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Assessment Phase	Inception	Evidence collection	Analysis	Reporting
Date	September-October 2023	October 2023-April 2024	January-May 2024	June-October 2024
Key activities	<p>The inception phase seeks to ground the assessment in an understanding of an organisation's mandate, operating model, and infrastructure; how it addresses cross-cutting issues. This includes how it interprets and tracks results and performance.</p> <p>An Inception Report concludes this stage.</p>	<p>This stage focuses on the collection of robust and relevant evidence against the assessment framework from three streams (document review, interviews, and surveys) to minimise information gaps and ensure that assessment findings are credible.</p>	<p>In this phase, the data collected are synthesised and analysed to derive findings that are supported by clear and triangulated evidence. Complementary data are collected as needed.</p>	<p>As the assessment report is being drafted, FAO verified factual findings, and FAO and the Institutional Leads commented on the analysis. The MOPAN Secretariat and three external experts carried out quality assurance. Key findings are presented to organisation and MOPAN members. A written response from the organisation's management concludes this stage.</p>
Key activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adaptation of indicator framework Preparation of evidence collection – survey partners, key informants, and key documents for review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key informant Interviews Document Review Partner Survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Triangulation Benchmarking Evidence documentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report drafting Quality Assurance Presentations
Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scoping Interviews – October 2023 Inception Report – November 2023 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interim Document Review (IDR) to MOPAN Secretariat – December 2023 Document gaps reviewed by FAO – November 2023-February 2024 Key informant interviews: January-February 2024 Partner survey launch and closure – December 2023-January 2024 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical Annex (Annex A) shared with FAO for fact-check – 16 May 2024 Preliminary Findings to FAO – 16 May 2024 Feedback received from FAO on Annex A and Preliminary Findings: 1-12 July 2023 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft Assessment report shared with FAO – 8 October 2024 Feedback received from FAO – 15 October 2024 Preview Briefing to all Members of FAO – 24 October 2024 Publication – November 2024 Launch – 14 November 2024

FIGURE 12: MOPAN’S ASSESSMENT PROCESS



**December 2023 –
Cape Town, South
Africa**

Members of a
traditional small
scale net fishery
load their nets into
their boat on the
beach at Fish Hoek.
Photo: © FAO /
Tommy Trenchard



**December 2023 –
Tengeru, Tanzania**

A drone is used to monitor crop production under a joint project with FAO, the European Union and the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Photo: ©FAO/Belén Gutiérrez Carmona

LIMITATIONS

The assessment applies a standardised framework that provides a picture of the organisation's performance. Thus, any general strengths and limitations of the MOPAN 3.1 methodology, which are laid out in MOPAN 3.1, Section 8, apply to this assessment as well.

The team was able to visit FAO HQ for an inception visit and again during the main phase of the assessment. Remaining interviews were conducted virtually, but this did not prove to be a limitation. There are a few limitations specific to this assessment of FAO:

- Several internal change processes were underway during the assessment period (2019-23). It is still too early to assess the full extent of some of these changes on FAO's performance.
- The assessment team was not given access to FAO's intranet, which meant that it was unable to independently verify and triangulate some of FAO's statements and data, including portfolio monitoring data.
- For the period under review, comprehensive overviews of *corporate-level* results on relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability were not available, nor had FAO commissioned independent external evaluations of this nature. To determine FAO's achievement of development and humanitarian results, the assessment drew on 35 evaluations, reviews and audits, evaluation synthesis report, as well as 14 country annual reports. PERs present a number of narrative-focused examples of FAO success but lack detail on consolidated results at output or outcome levels either for FAO as an organisation, or from each of the five regions.

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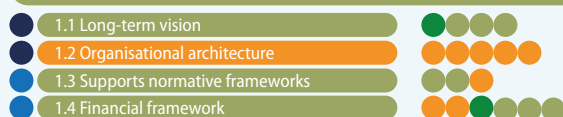
MOPAN (2020) MOPAN 3.1 Methodology Manual: 2020 Assessment Cycle, Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network, http://www.mopanonline.org/ourwork/themopanapproach/MOPAN_3.1_Methodology.pdf

ANNEX

FIGURE 13: **FAO PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW (current rating scale)**

Strategic management

KPI 1: Organisational architecture and financial framework

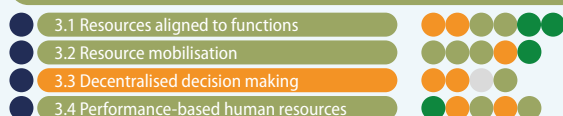


KPI 2: Cross-cutting issues



Operational management

KPI 3: Operating framework

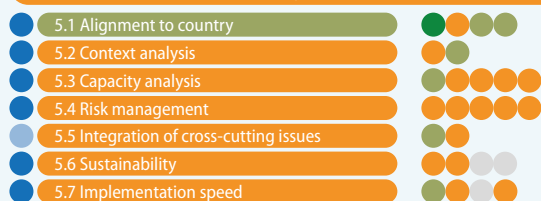


KPI 4: Cost- and value-conscious systems

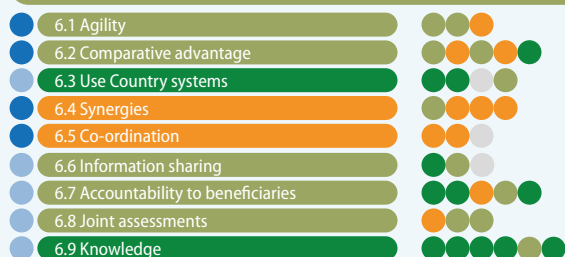


Relationship management

KPI 5: Relevance and agility



KPI 6: Coherent partnerships



Performance management

KPI 7: Results management



KPI 8: Evidence-based planning and programming

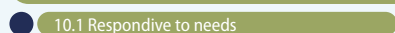


Results

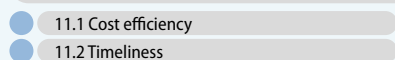
KPI 9: Achievement of results



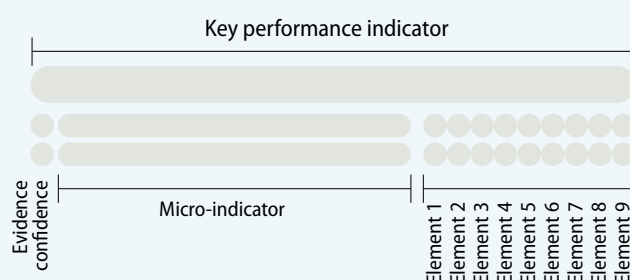
KPI 10: Relevance



KPI 11: Efficient delivery



KPI 12: Sustainability





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