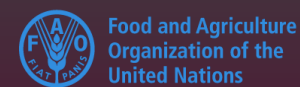




2026

FAO Technical Capacity Assessment - Phase 2 Final Report & Recommendations



Dalberg



Executive Summary

1. Recommendations Overview

2. Recommendations Details

3. Communications Approach

4. MEL Approach

Annex



FAO Stands at a Critical Juncture

FAO's core asset is its technical capabilities - the expertise, knowledge, and skills of its staff – which is fundamental to its credibility as the UN's normative agency for food and agriculture.

External pressures on FAO's technical expertise are amplifying. Rapid advancements in science, technology, and innovation are reshaping agrifood systems. Amplifying climate impacts, food insecurity, economic volatility, and geopolitical instability are raising Member States' demand for integrated, high-quality technical guidance. Donor budgets are tightening, and donors expect clearer impact, stronger accountability, greater UN collaboration, and more efficient technical delivery.

These trends have contributed to structural pressures on FAO's operating model and technical backbone. Loss of purchasing power in the regular budget over time has created budgetary pressure on FAO. Over time, FAO has increasingly leveraged voluntary contributions to amplify its reach, which has enabled FAO to expand its footprint to 100+ countries but without a corresponding increase in stable technical capacity. Given the heavily earmarked nature of most voluntary funding, much of FAO's additional expertise is funded through short-term, project-based engagements meaning there is high turnover of non-staff human resources, weak institutional memory, and fragmented technical leadership. This risks hollowing out FAO's normative core at the very moment demands are rising.

UN80 reforms further increase the urgency for transformation, seeking system-wide changes to ensure that every dollar, decision, and mandate delivers greater results for people and planet. FAO's coherence, collaboration, and cost-effectiveness will be increasingly scrutinized.

FAO's Technical Capacity is strong – but under strain

Phase 1 of the Corporate Technical Capacity Assessment highlighted FAO's global reputation for normative excellence, through standard-setting instruments and global public goods, as well as best-in-class data, knowledge, and analytical tools, which are used globally for research, policy, and practice.

However, the Phase 1 findings highlighted that to sustain this leadership, FAO must address several emerging gaps:

- **Agrifood systems & multidisciplinary approaches:** Whilst FAO's strategic framework emphasizes interdisciplinary ways of working, application of interdisciplinary approaches across the organization is uneven, limiting FAO's ability to drive integrated agrifood systems transformation.
- **Scientific and technological innovation:** FAO needs stronger, more systematic engagement with academia, research institutions, and the private sector to translate cutting-edge advances into guidance and policy implementation.
- **Decentralized expertise:** Regional and country offices require more consistent and deeper access to technical capacity currently centered at HQ to effectively adapt global guidance to national contexts.
- **Digital transformation:** Member States expect FAO to stay ahead of emerging technologies and to provide bespoke expertise beyond what can be accessed independently through AI tools.

For the Phase 1 Technical Capacity Assessment Findings see here: [FAO Technical Capacity Assessment Phase 1](#)

Organizational challenges constrain FAO's technical capacity

FAO is an organization in evolution, with many on-going organizational initiatives to boost its technical performance. New initiatives such as SCOPE bring deep technical expertise to the country level through roving task forces. Pilots led by the AI coordination team are experimenting with new tools to extract deeper insights from FAO's knowledge bases. Structural changes are underway to right size capacity in decentralized offices with the Country Office Network Transformation. These are just a few examples that underscore FAO's commitment to continuously strengthening its technical delivery.

These efforts notwithstanding, the Phase 2 diagnostic identified root cause challenges that constrain FAO's ability to access, leverage, grow, and sustain its technical capacity. Five interconnected root cause challenges were elevated for consideration:

- **Visibility of existing in-house expertise is low**, hampering effective workforce planning and collaboration
- **Knowledge risks being underutilized and lost**, due to insufficient knowledge management governance, strategy, and systems
- **Performance management is inadequate**, hindering managers' ability to develop technically excellent teams
- **Coordination across different organizational levels and technical units is insufficient**, limiting opportunities for multidisciplinary and "OneFAO" approaches
- **Strategic opportunities to leverage external expertise** via FAO's partners and individual external experts are missed

Because these issues are intertwined, they require a connected and sequenced set of solutions.

A strategic opportunity for FAO

Despite current pressures, FAO is well-positioned to lead within the UN system - building on its early and extensive country presence. By building a strong organizational environment for building and utilizing its technical capacity, FAO can become a model for integrated, coherent, and technically robust delivery across the UN. The path forward involves:

- Implementing “must-have” initiatives that improve access to existing expertise
- Supporting ongoing people initiatives which provide managers greater ability to build technically excellent teams
- Piloting high-potential initiatives which could support stronger collaboration within and outside the organization

This foundation is needed as new generations of workforce enter FAO over the next 10 years. Between 2025-2035, approximately a third of FAO staff on fixed term and continuing contracts will retire.¹ This creates an important window to strategically consider what new talent to bring in, as well as to foster new ways of working, underpinned by a rigorous culture shift.

[1] Based on FT and CO contracts, excluding YPP, UN-JPO and TPA, HR analysis conducted November 2025. *Note – estimate still being validated by HR.*

Critical recommendations for FAO

For implementation to be successful, change must be actionable, feasible, additive, and show quick returns to build momentum.

Three “must-haves” stand out as organization-wide enablers to better leverage existing technical capacity:

- **Establish a global people directory searchable by technical expertise, skills, and experience** to enable real-time visibility of available expertise across the organization – a vital tool for strategic workforce planning, and for fostering connectivity and collaboration.
- **Create a Knowledge Management (KM) governance framework and dedicated KM team** to drive integrated knowledge processes, improve continuity, and safeguard institutional learning; this is time sensitive for FAO to capitalize on AI-tools that can help connect, disseminate and draw insights from FAO’s vast pool of knowledge in new and powerful ways.
- **Strengthen the policies and application of improved performance management**, ensuring that managers have the tools in place to incentivize high quality technical work and develop technically excellent teams.

Alongside these “must-haves”, we recommend additional focus being given to those ongoing organizational efforts to strengthen global people management, enabling managers greater flexibility needed to build fit-for-purpose teams:

- **Promote voluntary staff mobility across HQ, regional, and country levels**, via structured career pathways that reward geographic and functional mobility.
- **Establish fixed-term renewable contracts as FAO’s long-term modality**, discontinuing conversion to continuing contracts and ensuring the use of fixed-term contracts for consultants performing multi-year, staff-like roles
- **Encourage Technical Directors to consider strategically locating HQ-reporting posts** in decentralized offices where technical proximity to country programs can improve global coordination and quality of normative work and technical delivery.

Critical recommendations for FAO (cont.)

Finally, high-potential initiatives that could fundamentally shift approaches to collaboration within and outside of FAO should be piloted before organization-wide rollout to ensure learning and refinement:

- **Launch a PSU-led pilot with a subset of technical units to strategically leverage partnerships and external expertise** to close priority technical capacity gaps identified Phase 1 and surface learnings on transformative partnership approaches.
- **Pilot dual reporting lines between HQ technical divisions and senior decentralized technical staff** to strengthen accountability and coherence.
- **Trial thematic working groups** in technical areas needing stronger coordination as identified in Phase 1, building on strong examples like the AMR working group to bring best practices in three level coordination across the Organization.

Enabling Sustainable Change

Successful implementation will require visible, sustained leadership from Senior Leadership and managers at all levels.

Senior leaders must champion the agenda, signal expectations, and reinforce accountability for technical excellence.

Managers must communicate consistently, role-model desired behaviors, and create an environment where technical quality is recognized and rewarded.

To ensure reform is feasible and sustained, sequencing is essential. Starting with “must haves” actions that help build staff confidence and generate early momentum. A **dedicated change taskforce** should be established to communicate and support implementation, monitor progress, and ensure learning informs scaling.



1

**Recommendations
Overview**

2

**Recommendation
Details**

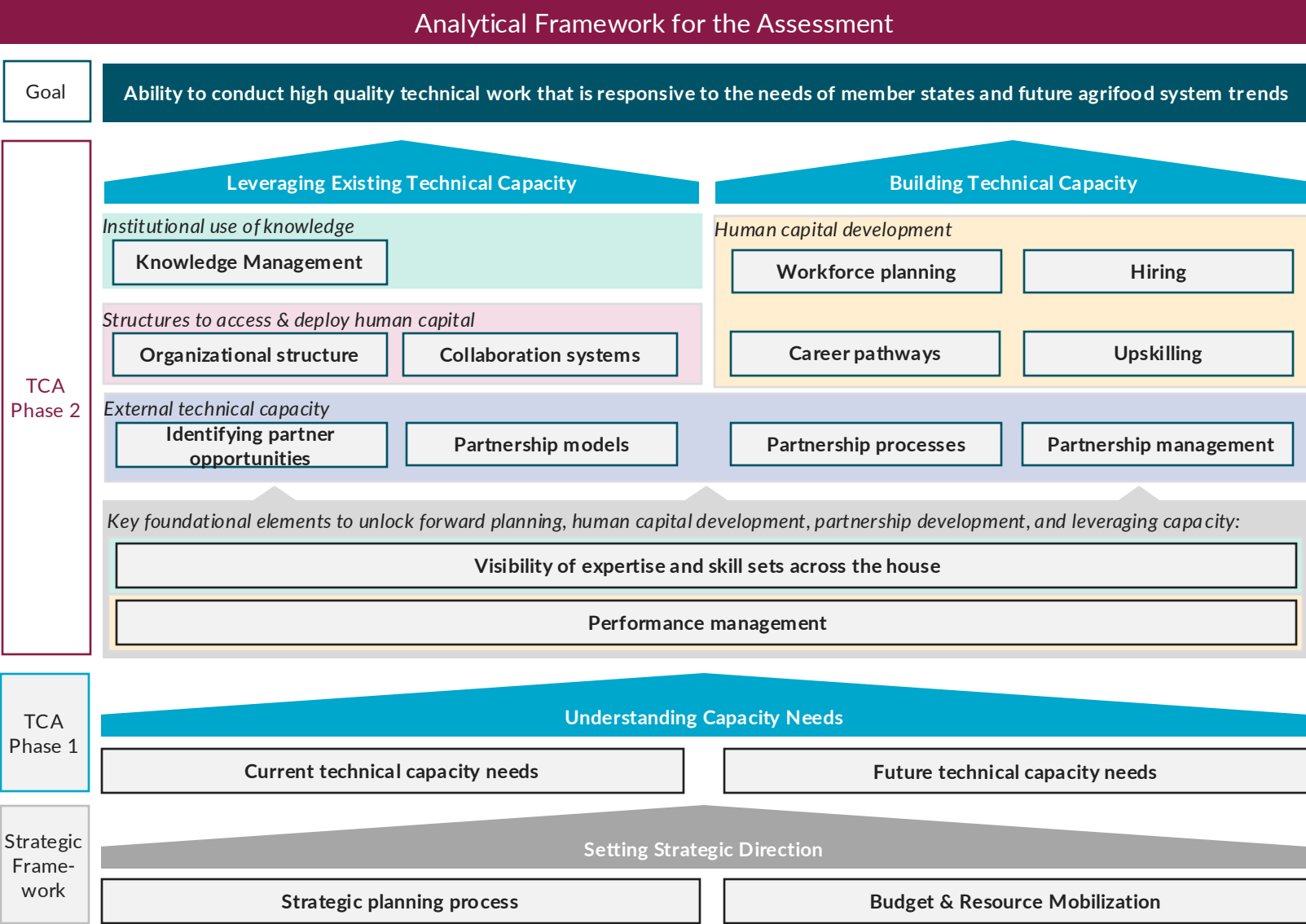
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**Communications
Approach**

4

**MEL
Approach**

Overview of approach | A consultative approach was used to identify key challenges in identifying and leveraging technical capacity and to design solutions that would complement FAO's on-going efforts



- Overview of the approach
- Strengthening technical capacity requires both the ability to build new capacity and to leverage existing capacity. The Phase 2 assessment looked at the organizational components that facilitate this (see *analytical framework*).
 - Applying this analytical framework, we aimed to identify organizational challenges that were impacting technical capacity and put forward recommendations to address them. These challenges - and the solutions to address them - are deeply intertwined and mutually reinforcing.
 - We took a consultative approach to the assessment: across diagnosis and solutioning, we held consultations with 100 FAO internal stakeholders, building on existing findings from staff survey and consultations in Phase 1. An extensive document review was also conducted.
 - FAO is an organization in evolution, and there are already many on-going internal initiatives on-going at FAO seeking to positively impact technical capacity. These are elevated in this document alongside the recommendations as important areas to continue to champion and scale.

Recommendation Summary (1/4)

Priority area from root cause diagnostic		Recommendations	What could this achieve?	Related initiatives to champion ²
Visibility of in-house expertise What is going well: - FAO has a technically excellent and diversely skilled workforce, creating a vast pool of internal expertise and experience globally Challenge: - With over 16,000 staff/NSHR¹ across hundreds of units, it can be hard for staff to quickly identify if an expert or skillset exists within FAO - There is also a time-sensitive opportunity for FAO to leverage new AI tools that can significantly improve how technical knowledge is captured, shared, and accessed across the organization. Impact: - Inability to conduct targeted, strategic workforce planning - Missed opportunities for collaboration across FAO, leading to lower quality of technical work - Wasted resources in time identifying internal experts or engaging outside expertise (e.g., consultants) when in-house expertise exists	Must-have	Strengthen access to existing expertise at FAO by establishing an AI-enabled people directory searchable by expertise and skillset (leveraging planned move to Oracle Cloud solution led by HR, with support from CSI) - HR to support the end-to-end population and maintenance process, including prefilling current and new staff and NSHR profiles with field data already captured in Oracle - CSI provides technical development support - Staff mandated to complete, and routinely verify and update their skills and expertise as captured - HR to utilize the skills directory to conduct workforce analytics	- Strengthen access to expertise sitting across FAO, by enabling staff to easily identify staff and non-staff human resources with relevant skills or expertise and enabling them to reach out directly for technical support or input - Greater visibility for workforce planning, incl. FAO's expertise mix over time	Strategic Workforce Planning Exercise (HR) Workforce Planning Framework (HR)
Institutionalisation of knowledge What is working well: - FAO is globally renowned for its knowledge and data - There have been several efforts to improve how knowledge is produced, managed, and accessed (e.g., agroinformatics, TELLUS, RLC KM team) Challenge: - Knowledge management systems and efforts to improve KM across the organization remain fragmented - Internal, institutional knowledge is not always codified for future use, meaning it is lost when a project ends or when staff leave Impact: - Under-utilization of knowledge created at FAO (e.g., application of global knowledge at DO level) and missed opportunities to fully utilize a multi-disciplinary, agrifood systems approach - Wasted efforts duplicating work that already exists - Lower quality work due to not using past lessons learned - Weakened ability to innovate due to knowledge silos	Must-have	Enhance FAO's ability to build on its internal expertise by establishing a dedicated KM team, oversight, and governance framework to define and implement an organization-wide KM strategy. Including: - Ownership from senior leadership (e.g., Chief Scientist) - Dedicated KM team (3 FTE) - Contributions from knowledge owners across units - An FAO-wide knowledge management strategy - Stronger processes for internal knowledge capture (e.g., project learnings) - AI-enabled KM solutions - Stronger mechanisms for knowledge sharing, dissemination and peer learning - Adequate resourcing and investment in KM systems, platforms and capabilities	Enhance FAO's ability to build on its internal expertise by ensuring FAO's knowledge is documented, accessible, and regularly leveraged by all staff and non-staff human resources	The AI Coordination Team efforts to build and execute on a strategic vision of AI-use at FAO, including piloting promising initiatives (e.g., TELLUS)

Recommendation Summary (2/4)

Priority area from root cause diagnostic	Recommendations		What could this achieve?	Related initiatives to champion ³
Ability for managers to develop technically excellent teams What is going well - FAO has a highly skilled workforce and ability to attract high quality applicants across a wide range of sectors Challenge - Performance management does not sufficiently differentiate performance and mechanisms for rewarding talent or having consequences for underperforming staff have limited uptake in practice - PEMS reviews do not sufficiently differentiate performance, (95% of staff are rated as fully meeting or exceeding expectations)¹ - There is limited incentive for high performance; and consequences for underperformance (e.g., withholding WIGSI) are in practice often blocked due to dispute - Conversion to continuing contracts is almost automatic after a certain tenure, due to limited use of lower PEMS ratings - Greater balance is needed between stability and flexibility in FAO's contract mix ~19% of FAO's PWB staff is on continuing contracts, which limit managers' flexibility to remove posts (as continuing staff need to be redeployed) or dismiss staff based on performance (unsatisfactory service throughout successive transfers is needed to terminate continuing contract staff) ~17% of human resources are on short-term consulting contracts, which make it challenging for managers to build strong institutional knowledge within teams Impact: - Reduced team capacity due to underperforming staff that are neither supported to improve nor dismissed - Difficulty for managers to incentivize strong performance across key areas (e.g., upskilling, collaboration, etc.) - Overuse of consulting contracts risks loss of institutional knowledge, workforce instability, and transaction costs (e.g., re-hiring, contract breaks) - Negative impact on culture and teamwork due to lack of effective feedback and supported career growth	Must-have	Strengthen performance incentives and consequences to improve quality of in-house expertise by ensuring best practices are incorporated into future PEMS policies and approaches (to support on-going PEMS reform led by HR), including (<i>non exhaustive</i>): - Linking PEMS to incentives by tying the process more closely to within grade salary increase and contract renewal - Evidence-backed demonstration of competency levels based on a revised competency framework - Mandating broader multi-rater inputs based on role (e.g., feedback from manager, subordinate, external partner, collaborator from another unit) - Pilot calibration process with external support to help managers ensure distribution of scores within divisions and offices - Leadership role modelling and vocal support of a stronger coaching and development culture	Improve quality of FAO's in-house expertise by strengthening the link between performance, incentives, and consequences to promote professional development in-line with FAO's needs	Review of recruitment processes and implementation of new recruitment guidelines (HR, action under the Human Resource Strategy and Action Plan) PEMS assessment and policy revision (HR) Career development framework (HR, action under the Human Resource Strategy and Action Plan)
	Complement to on-going people initiatives	Strengthen balance of stability and flexibility in FAO's contract offering to improve the quality of in-house expertise by establishing fixed-term contracts as the long-term contract modality for ongoing positions² - Discontinue issuance of continuing contracts to staff, with long-term job security provided instead through successive fixed-term renewals, subject to performance, funding and organizational need - Reduce usage of consulting contracts for positions that (i) perform ongoing, staff-like functions, and (ii) are likely needed over several biennia, in favor of fixed-term staff contracts - Closely tie strategic workforce planning and performance management (above) to contract renewal decisions (e.g., by aligning the process timelines and active recommendation)	Improve quality and relevance of FAO's in-house expertise by improving the balance of stability and flexibility in FAO's contract offering	

Notes: [1] JIU report (2023) [2] Under the ILOAT interpretation of FAO rules, non-renewal of fixed term staff is allowed where (i) funds are no longer available, (ii) the post is no longer needed, or (iii) unsatisfactory performance is duly documented; [3] These are initiatives already underway at FAO

Recommendation Summary (3/4)

Priority area from root cause diagnostic		Recommendations	What could this achieve?	Related initiatives to champion ²
Coordination across organizational levels What is going well - FAO has moved towards becoming more multidisciplinary, by adopting a cross-cutting strategic framework - On-going restructuring efforts at the regional and country office level aim to ensure FAO has the right structures to deliver at the decentralized level Challenge - Insufficient leadership and coordination of collaborative, multidisciplinary work across different organizational levels (e.g., HQ, RO, COs) and across teams (e.g., technical units) - Despite existing mobility mechanisms (e.g., lateral transfer, short term assignments) only 3% of staff (less than 1% of all human resources) change duty station each year. Impact: - Disconnect between work conducted at HQ and work conducted by decentralized office (DO) level - Inability to fully leverage a “One FAO” approach - Lower quality of technical work due to missed opportunities to bring geographical context or multidisciplinary inputs	Complement to on-going people initiatives	Improve collaboration to strengthen access to existing expertise by promoting greater voluntary staff mobility through career pathways that reward geographic mobility, through levers such as: - Make 1-2 years in a decentralized office (or equivalent for external hires) a requirement for senior level positions (e.g., P5/D1) - Increase the offer and uptake of existing mobility opportunities through a structured annually-run program for lateral transfers for P2/P3 staff	- Strengthen access to available expertise within FAO by improving collaboration between individuals across levels and sense of “One FAO” - Improve quality of FAO’s technical expertise by increasing proportion of staff with regional and country experience	Roving technical specialist teams as part of the SCOPE initiative to conduct country economic scenario analyses in connection with the CCA and UNSDCF² - initial implementation of this model has proven successful, and could be expanded or replicated in other areas to bring technical backstopping for decentralized offices Country office network transformation to revise the workforce structure and resourcing flexibility of country offices to better meet country needs (OSP)
		Facilitate greater exchange between HQ and DOs to strengthen access existing expertise by enabling and encouraging Technical Division Directors to selectively, strategically locate some HQ-reporting posts in DOs These staff members would still work on the global portfolio and be part of the HQ team, but have closer working relations with the DO teams through geographical proximity	- Strengthen access to available expertise by collapsing the geographic silos between units and facilitating closer exchange - Improve expertise by broadening global recruiting talent pool	
	Pilots	Facilitate greater exchange between HQ and DOs to strengthen access to existing expertise by piloting dual reporting lines between HQ technical divisions and senior technical staff in decentralized offices Near term: Pilot secondary HQ supervisors for senior technical staff (P4-5) in decentralized offices to a parent technical division in HQ (potentially starting with 2-3 technical areas first) Longer term: Leverage insights from the pilot to inform future organizational design discussions, so that a shift towards a full matrix model can potentially be revisited under future strategic frameworks	- Strengthen access to available expertise by building closer links between technical staff working across the 3 levels - Potential to improve the strategic coherence and execution of FAO’s work by improving alignment between global and regional work	
		To enhance cross-unit exchange of expertise, foster thematic working groups to help coordinate technical work across units - Leverage best practices of strong existing WGs (e.g., AMR) - Pilot WGs in areas facing challenges in cross-level collaboration (as identified in the Phase 1 Technical Capacity Assessment) - Use the pilots to generate learnings before scaling model to other areas	Enhance how internal capacity is leveraged by supporting closer working relations, collaboration, and knowledge sharing across units in the implementation of FAO’s strategy	

Recommendation Summary (4/4)

Priority area from root cause diagnostic		Recommendations	What could this achieve?	Related initiatives to champion ¹
Ability to leverage external expertise What is going well - FAO has a strong network of partnerships across governments, academia, and development partners - In its latest strategy, FAO set the intention of moving towards more transformative partnerships, which focus on driving systemic, long-term, and disruptive action Challenge: - There are many areas where it is more advantageous for FAO to bring in external expertise rather than build expertise in-house - Whilst FAO has many modalities to bring in external expertise (e.g., secondments, reference centers, expert networks), there are underutilized or leveraged in a small-scale, ad-hoc way – with staff reporting a lack of familiarity with many options - In addition, poor partnership management can result in expertise and knowledge that is built through partnerships being lost Impact: - Untapped potential of partners' technical expertise, tools, and knowledge to help close FAO's technical capacity gaps - Underuse of models that best facilitate technical exchange, upskilling, knowledge sharing - Variable sustained impact of partnerships, with unclear expectations and uneven knowledge transfer back into FAO systems	Pilots	To leverage expertise from external partners for catalytic impact, launch a PSU-led pilot to work with select technical units to launch new partnerships which close identified technical capacity gaps and sustainably strengthen FAO's capabilities. This will include: - Synthesize Phase 1 findings on expertise gaps (e.g., behavioural science, AI, biotech) to identify which can be best be filled through external expertise. This includes areas where partners will have a higher comparative advantage relative FAO, such as certain fast evolving areas of science and industry, partners with unique convening power, labour market advantages, or highly specialised/contextualized knowledge. - PSU to work proactively with relevant technical units to define the need, identify potential external partners, and determine optimal modalities (e.g., academic secondments, reference centers, expert networks), and operationalize the partnerships in a way that can deliver scaled impact. - Capture learnings, to inform further roll-out for additional technical areas across the three levels (HQ-RO-CO) as well as opportunities for improved partnership processes Leverage pilot learnings in other areas to embed a strategic approach across the house	- Use FAO resources more effectively by successfully identifying when expertise needs to be built in-house versus utilizing partners - Improve access to external expertise by ensuring technical leads are aware of the available models, bring this into their strategy, and are supported to do so - Keep FAO at the cutting edge of agrifood system thinking by working with experts at the forefront of their fields	Transformative Partnerships approach as per guidance launched in 2023, aiming to shift towards partnerships that contribute to sustainable catalytic outcomes (PSU) Review of partnership management and due diligence processes to engage partners (PSU, PSS)

Notes: [1] These are initiatives already underway at FAO

The suggested sequencing helps prioritize implementation of the recommendations in line with biennium planning and starting with those that are critical enablers

Type	Recommendation	Potential leads*	Proposed sequencing
Must-have	Strengthen access to existing expertise at FAO by establishing an AI-enabled people directory searchable by expertise and skillset	HR	Start ASAP ; these recommendations are critical enablers to ensure that other organizational efforts have their full impact
	Enhance FAO's ability to build on its internal expertise by establishing a dedicated KM team, oversight, and governance framework to define and implement an organization-wide KM strategy.	Chief Scientist	
	Strengthen performance management, incentives, and consequences to improve quality of in-house expertise by ensuring best practices are incorporated into future PEMS policies and approaches	HR	
Complement to on-going people initiatives	Strengthen balance of stability and flexibility in FAO's contract offering to improve the quality of in-house expertise by establishing fixed-term contracts as the long-term contract modality for ongoing positions ²	HR	Start soon on discontinuing conversions to fixed term contracts, as policy changes will only apply to new hires
	Improve collaboration to strengthen access to existing expertise by promoting greater voluntary staff mobility through career pathways that reward geographic mobility	HR	Reduced use of consulting contracts for staff-like roles is a long-term consideration over multiple biennia
	Facilitate greater exchange between HQ and DOs to strengthen access existing expertise by enabling and encouraging Technical Division Directors to selectively and strategically locate some HQ-reporting posts in DOs	OSP, HR	To consider in connection with next biennium planning
Pilot	Facilitate greater exchange between HQ and DOs to strengthen access existing expertise by piloting dual reporting lines between HQ technical divisions and senior technical staff in decentralized offices	Chief of Cabinet, HR, OSP	
	To enhance cross-unit exchange of expertise, foster thematic working groups to help coordinate technical work across units	OSP, relevant Technical Unit Leads	
	To leverage expertise from external partners for catalytic impact, launch a PSU-led pilot to work with select technical units to launch new partnerships which close identified technical capacity gaps and sustainably strengthen FAO's capabilities	PSU, OSP, relevant Technical Unit Leads	Start soon , as findings can generate learnings for positioning of partnerships ahead of next biennium planning

* Identifying the right lead for each recommendation will depend on which units are best placed in terms of organisational role and capacity. In addition, each recommendation should have Senior Level accountability (e.g., ownership and endorsement from a Core Leaders).

Most recommendations will require an investment cost in the short-term to support their set-up, but with limited recurring costs to implement them in the longer-term

Type	Recommendation	Resources needed	
		Additional human resources	Other costs
Must-have	Strengthen access to existing expertise at FAO by establishing an AI-enabled people directory searchable by expertise and skillset	6 months – 1 year: 1 FTE in HR required to support set up Long term: Partial FTE to maintain and run analytics	One-off IT set-up: Note Implementation of HCM Oracle Cloud already planned for 2026, only light tailoring of tool only expected
	Enhance FAO's ability to build on its internal expertise by establishing a dedicated KM team, oversight, and governance framework to define and implement an organization-wide KM strategy.	Long term: 3 FTE required to form new KM team	IT investment and maintenance: Pending needs identified by KM team, funding to build/acquire AI tools, including upfront adoption cost, license, and maintenance.
	Strengthen performance management, incentives, and consequences to improve quality of in-house expertise by ensuring best practices are incorporated into future PEMS policies and approaches	1-2 years: 1-2 FTE in HR required to support managers adopt stronger performance management approach	
Complement to on-going people initiatives	Strengthen balance of stability and flexibility in FAO's contract offering to improve the quality of in-house expertise by establishing fixed-term contracts as the long-term contract modality for ongoing positions ²	(i) discontinuing conversion to continuing contracts for new hires: (ii) identifying and offering fixed-term contracts to replace long-standing consultancy roles:	----- Resources only required for policy change and communications -----
	Improve collaboration to strengthen access to existing expertise by promoting greater voluntary staff mobility through career pathways that reward geographic mobility	Long term: Potential cost implication of relative mix of FT versus non-staff contracts	
	Facilitate greater exchange between HQ and DOs to strengthen access existing expertise by enabling and encouraging Technical Division Directors to selectively and strategically locate some HQ-reporting posts in DOs	Long term: Partial FTE in HR required to facilitate program	
	Facilitate greater exchange between HQ and DOs to strengthen access existing expertise by piloting dual reporting lines between HQ technical divisions and senior technical staff in decentralized offices	----- Integrated into standard workforce planning approach -----	
Pilot	Facilitate greater exchange between HQ and DOs to strengthen access existing expertise by piloting dual reporting lines between HQ technical divisions and senior technical staff in decentralized offices	6 months – 1 year: Partial FTE in OSP to support pilot.	
	To enhance cross-unit exchange of expertise, foster thematic working groups to help coordinate technical work across units	6 months – 1 year: Partial FTEs in relevant tech divisions to coordinate	
	To leverage expertise from external partners for catalytic impact, launch a PSU-led pilot to work with select technical units to launch new partnerships which close identified technical capacity gaps and sustainably strengthen FAO's capabilities	6 months – 1 year: Partial FTE in PSU to support pilot.	

Key cost: HIGH MED LOW

These investments would be expected to bring about returns in terms of higher efficiency and quality of technical work

Executive Summary

1. Recommendations Overview

2. Recommendations Details

- Must-have

- **AI-enabled people directory searchable by expertise and skillset**
- Dedicated KM team, oversight, and governance framework
- Strengthened performance management, incentives, and consequences
- Complement to on-going people initiatives
- Pilot

3. Communications Approach

4. MEL Approach

Annex



To tackle limited visibility of in-house expertise, FAO should develop an organization-wide people directory searchable by expertise/skillset to facilitate strategic workforce planning and better connect colleagues

SITUATION AND CHALLENGE

- **FAO staff have limited visibility of technical expertise and skillsets across the organization and current systems that allow staff to search for profiles lack essential information on expertise and skills**
 - Currently available tools have limited search functionality based on skillset, or using formal requests to access to staffing reports
 - Staff cite often relying on personal networks to find experts, which can be imperfect and time-consuming
- **FAO lacks an organization-wide view of staff skills profile**
 - Beyond job title (which can often be a minimal or broad description) there is no consolidated view of personnel profiles in terms of expertise and skillset across FAO's hundreds of technical units
- **These challenges have several impacts on technical capacity, such as:**
 - FAO cannot easily identify capacity gaps or anticipate future expertise needs across the organization, hindering strategic workforce planning
 - Staff often need to formally request or use their personal networks to identify if an in-house expert exists, leading to wasted time, delays, and duplicated effort
 - Lack of visibility of existing in-house experts can lead to missed opportunities for cross-unit collaboration, as well as potentially wasted resources in engaging outside expertise (e.g., consultants) when in-house expertise exists

RECOMMENDATION

- Establish and maintain a people directory, with AI-enabled search by expertise & skillset (leveraging planned move to Oracle Cloud solution led by HR).** The new system would incorporate richer profile information (skills, thematic areas of work, country experience), advanced filtering, and AI-enabled search, ensuring staff can quickly identify the relevant expertise across the organization and analytics on workforce composition can be performed
- HR to support the end-to-end population and maintenance process
 - CSI provides technical development support
 - Staff to complete, routinely verify, and update their skills and expertise as captured
 - HR and OSP to utilize the skills directory to conduct workforce analytics

VISION OF SUCCESS

- **FAO has a single, reliable and widely used source for viewing internal expertise,** enabling staff across headquarters, regional offices and country offices to quickly locate the right technical skills
- **Technical collaboration becomes faster, more accurate, and less dependent on informal networks,** helping reduce duplication, accelerate technical support to countries, and improve quality assurance
- **Staff and leadership have greater visibility of in-house expertise, allowing for workforce planning against evolving needs.** The people directory can provide analytics that strengthen strategic workforce planning by allowing the detection expertise concentration and gaps

FAO should leverage the planned HR implementation to Oracle Cloud to build the people directory; all staff should be able to access the directory to update their profiles and view others' skillsets

Key elements of AI-enabled people directory searchable by expertise and skillset

Component	Description
Leverage the migration of HR management system	- Leverage the planned migration of human resources management into Oracle Cloud Solutions as an opportunity to create a functional people directory available to all staff, ensuring core staff data, technical profiles, and expertise tags are fully integrated and consistently maintained - In implementing the new HCM, it should be factored in at an early stage how it can enable the integration of the skills repository and provide the functionality required to make those skills visible, searchable, and actionable
Embed dynamic expertise profiles (see next slides)	- Introduce staff profiles that integrate structured data (from HR) with self-reported expertise, experience, and skills. It should allow searching by i) name, ii) job title, iii) email, iv) grade, v) duty station, vi) division/ office, vii) contract type (staff/ consultant), viii) biography, ix) areas of technical expertise (skill tags), x) languages, xi) regions/countries of experience - Self-reported expertise should cover technical domains (e.g., AMR, nutrition) and functional capabilities (e.g., M&E, modelling). Build from CSHL's ongoing work on skill repositories and information available on GRMS to avoid duplication and support scalability. Allow space for free text, to ensure the directory captures all potential and evolving expertise areas (note: implementation should not be delayed by creation of an exhaustive skills taxonomy)
Leverage directory for workforce planning (see next slides)	- Use the directory to generate organization-wide analytics on staff concentration and distribution of expertise - Use these analytics to support strategic workforce planning, mobility decisions, and targeted upskilling using live, automated dashboards rather than manual data pulls - Use these insights for to identify gaps against emerging needs and inform decisions on recruitment, mobility, and targeted upskilling
Ensure usability and access to all staff and non-staff	- Ensure access to the full directory for all staff and non-staff human resources - Make the directory accessible via Oracle Cloud Solutions, FAO intranet, and potentially MS Teams integrations - Provide a simple interface with clear guidance and support to encourage widespread adoption - Offer onboarding materials and light-touch support to encourage use
Introduce AI-enabled capabilities	- Leverage AI tools to enhance search, matching, and forward-looking insights (incl. existing AI-functions of Oracle Cloud). Examples include: - Automated recommendations for colleagues who have worked on similar themes - AI-assisted matching based on a user's prompt (e.g., "who has experience in strengthening rural livelihoods in Ghana") - Analytics that highlight where expertise exists, where gaps may be emerging, and where capacity is at risk (e.g., limited depth in a technical area)

The people directory should include essential staff information, including contact details, areas of technical expertise, functional skillsets, and experience, among others

Illustrative example of staff profile on people directory



Amina Hassan

Job Title: Animal Health Officer

Email: amina.hassan@fao.org

Grade: P3

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Bio (AI-generated): Amina Hassan is an Animal Health Officer specializing in One Health and veterinary epidemiology, with over 12 years of experience in the prevention and control of transboundary animal diseases across East and North Africa. She has led epidemiological investigations, supported the design of national surveillance and early warning systems, and contributed to regional strategies on zoonoses and antimicrobial resistance (AMR)

Areas of technical expertise/ skill tags: Transboundary animal diseases; Veterinary epidemiology; One Health; Zoonoses prevention and control; Surveillance & early warning systems; Outbreak investigation; Antimicrobial resistance (AMR); Disease modelling

Languages: English, French, Arabic

Regions/ countries of experience: East Africa (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia); North Africa (Egypt, Tunisia)

History of positions at FAO: Animal Health Officer, FAO Kenya (2020-present); Veterinary Epidemiologist, FAO Egypt (2016-2020)

Previous employers: Kenya Directorate of Veterinary Services, Nairobi, Kenya (2013-2016); International Livestock Research Institute, Nairobi, Kenya (2010-2013)

Education:

- PhD, Veterinary Epidemiology, University of Nairobi, Kenya (2013-2017)
- MSc, Infectious Diseases and One Health, University of Glasgow, United Kingdom (2008-2009)
- Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine, University of Nairobi, Kenya (2003-2008)

FAO publications: Strengthening Rift Valley Fever Surveillance Through One Health Approaches in East Africa (2023), Assessment of AMR Risks in Poultry Value Chains in North Africa (2022), Guidelines for Community-Based Surveillance of Transboundary Animal Diseases (2021)

Memberships: Member, International Society for Veterinary Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine (ISVEP)

Internal affiliations: RENOFARM Community of Practice, One Health Taskforce, AMR Working Group

The people directory can allow FAO to generate analytics and insights that can inform strategic workforce planning – including identifying technical capacity gaps, surplus, or areas at risk

Generation of analytics for workforce planning

- The people directory can be used to generate analytics, allowing FAO to map the distribution of technical expertise across offices and divisions. These insights could allow FAO to plan its workforce against emerging needs, identify gaps, anticipate future demand, and prioritize recruitment or training
 - It should highlight imbalances between where expertise sits and where programme demands are rising (e.g., climate resilience, animal health, emergencies)
 - It should enable FAO to detect over-concentration of expertise in certain duty stations or divisions, prompting rebalancing or targeted hiring
 - It should support succession planning by identifying functions/ technical areas with high proportions of staff approaching retirement or the end of contract
 - It should track the evolution of technical skills over time, showing whether FAO is building or losing capacity in priority areas

Example: How analytics support workforce planning (illustrative)

Analytics from the directory show that:

- E.g., there are 480 experts working on Bue Transformation, evenly distributed between HQ and decentralized offices, with 98 aquaculture specialists worldwide
- E.g., there are only 3 aquaculture specialists are positioned in Northern Africa, where several governments are actively seeking FAO support to increase production
- E.g., One-third of existing aquaculture staff hold narrow sub-specializations (e.g., hatchery management, feed systems), leaving gaps in value chain development, environmental impact assessment, and sustainable intensification
- E.g., 28 aquaculture experts are on short-term contracts

These insights would allow FAO to:

- E.g., Prioritize recruitment of aquaculture specialists to regions with high demand and where experts are near-contract end
- E.g., Plan multidisciplinary capacity development, combining aquaculture production expertise with environmental and water governance, and food systems analytics

Potential mapping of expertise analytics (illustrative)



To establish an effective people directory, FAO needs to establish clear accountability and expectations for both business owners and staff users

Enabling conditions for success	Critical enablers required
1. Clear ownership and accountability	• HR to own the end-to-end population and maintenance process, ensuring the migration to Oracle Cloud Solutions results in a functional people directory. Ideally, this is done in parallel with the planned migration of the HCM to Oracle Cloud. HR would be responsible for: i. Prefill all current staff/NSHR profiles with field data already captured in Oracle (e.g., job title, division/ office, etc) ii. Prefill new staff and NSHR profiles during onboarding iii. Ensuring profiles of staff and NSHR who leave are removed iv. Pushing for updates when staff and NSHR change duty stations or roles v. Oversee staff and NSHR completeness and upkeep of profiles (e.g., sending automated reminders, report completion status) vi. Generate an AI-assisted bio using CV and Oracle data • CSI to provide support in the development and implementation within Oracle Cloud as needed • Staff and NSHR to be accountable for uploading key info into their own profiles and updating them yearly. • Annual validation cycle: staff receive a yearly prompt to log in, confirm their profile, and update skills gained; For consultants and other NSHR, require a profile update at the start of contract
2. Effective communication and support for uptake	• Launch communications campaign highlighting how the directory reduces time spent finding expertise and supports cross-divisional collaboration • Produce a short user guide and demo video showing how to search profiles, tag skills, and update information, including it in the communications campaign, making it available in the intranet and integrating it in the mandatory onboarding trainings for new joiners • Create a link in the intranet and MS Teams to the people directory for easy access • Provide temporary help desk support during the initial months to build user confidence and address early issues
3. Incentives aligned with expected behaviors	• Position directory upkeep as a core professional expectation, directly tied to effective collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and workforce planning • Integrate profile completeness and upkeep as a PEMS requirement (e.g., profile must be updated before PEMS review can be submitted) • Regularly share simple analytics on where technical expertise sits across the organization (e.g., “100 staff working on X across 20 countries”) to increase visibility and prompt staff to keep their profiles current

The people directory needs to be continuously improved; its use will be enhanced by a culture that encourages technical staff to reach out to each other for technical dialogues

Enabling conditions for success	Critical enablers required
4. Continuous review and improvement of the directory	• Establish a feedback loop to regularly assess how the directory is being used (e.g., which features attract the most traffic, search patterns, frequency of use, profiles updated) • Collect user feedback to identify usability issues, low-value features, or missing functionalities, and update accordingly to maintain relevance and ease of use
5. A culture that encourages reaching out	• Foster a culture of lateral connection and collaboration by actively encouraging staff to connect with colleagues outside of their immediate network when seeking technical inputs and dialogue, and to use the people directory to do so • This should be via a combination of FAO-wide, regional-level, and country level communications • Whilst this would not replace the need for formal requests for staff time or collaboration, informal communication should be encouraged as a starting point • Senior leaders should act as role models, and signal that formalities and hierarchies should not be a barrier to technical colleagues reaching out to those in other units • To further promote this culture, ask managers to schedule cross-team exchanges (e.g., joint technical sessions, peer-learning meetings) and to actively introduce their staff to counterparts in other units to broaden networks and normalize lateral technical dialogues

Executive Summary

1. Recommendations Overview

2. Recommendations Details

- **Must-have**

- AI-enabled people directory searchable by expertise and skillset

- **Dedicated KM team, oversight, and governance framework**

- Strengthened performance management, incentives, and consequences

- Complement to on-going people initiatives
- Pilot

3. Communications Approach

4. MEL Approach

Annex



To address fragmented knowledge management initiatives, FAO should establish a KM governance framework and team to set and deliver a unified KM vision and approach and champion a supportive culture

SITUATION AND CHALLENGE

- **High-value technical knowledge¹ is inconsistently captured and not integrated into a coherent institutional framework**
 - Externally facing technical knowledge, such as publications, evaluations, thematic reports, and national datasets, among others, is generally captured but spread across multiple platforms with different owners
 - Internally generated knowledge, including project insights, lessons learned, field experience, community of practice outputs, and best practices, is unsystematically codified, inconsistently stored, or held in informal locations, creating gaps in institutional memory²
- **Efforts to consolidate datasets and build knowledge management platforms are happening across FAO, but they lack a unified vision and leadership to ensure coherent investment and alignment**
 - Multiple but disconnected KM initiatives exist across divisions and regions (e.g., repositories, regional KM platforms, data consolidation efforts, AI-enabled tools), but are ad-hoc and disconnected
- **Staff have limited awareness of available KM platforms or find them too time-consuming to search and use.** This leads staff to:
 - Rely heavily on personal networks, leading to uneven experiences in leveraging knowledge
 - Recreate knowledge that already exists
 - Use informal, fragmented storage solutions (e.g., personal drives, private Teams channels), further entrenching silos
 - Duplicate efforts across teams and regions, reducing efficiency and slowing delivery
 - Waste time on manual searching

RECOMMENDATION

- **Establish a KM governance framework and team mandated to define FAO's KM vision and strategy, and lead coherent, system-wide implementation.** The team would:
 - Develop and deliver an FAO-wide knowledge management strategy
 - Strengthen capture of both internal knowledge & externally shared knowledge products
 - Identify, prioritize and scale AI-enabled KM solutions
 - Advocate for adequate resourcing and investment in KM systems, platforms and capabilities
 - Strengthen and coordinate mechanisms for knowledge sharing and peer learning

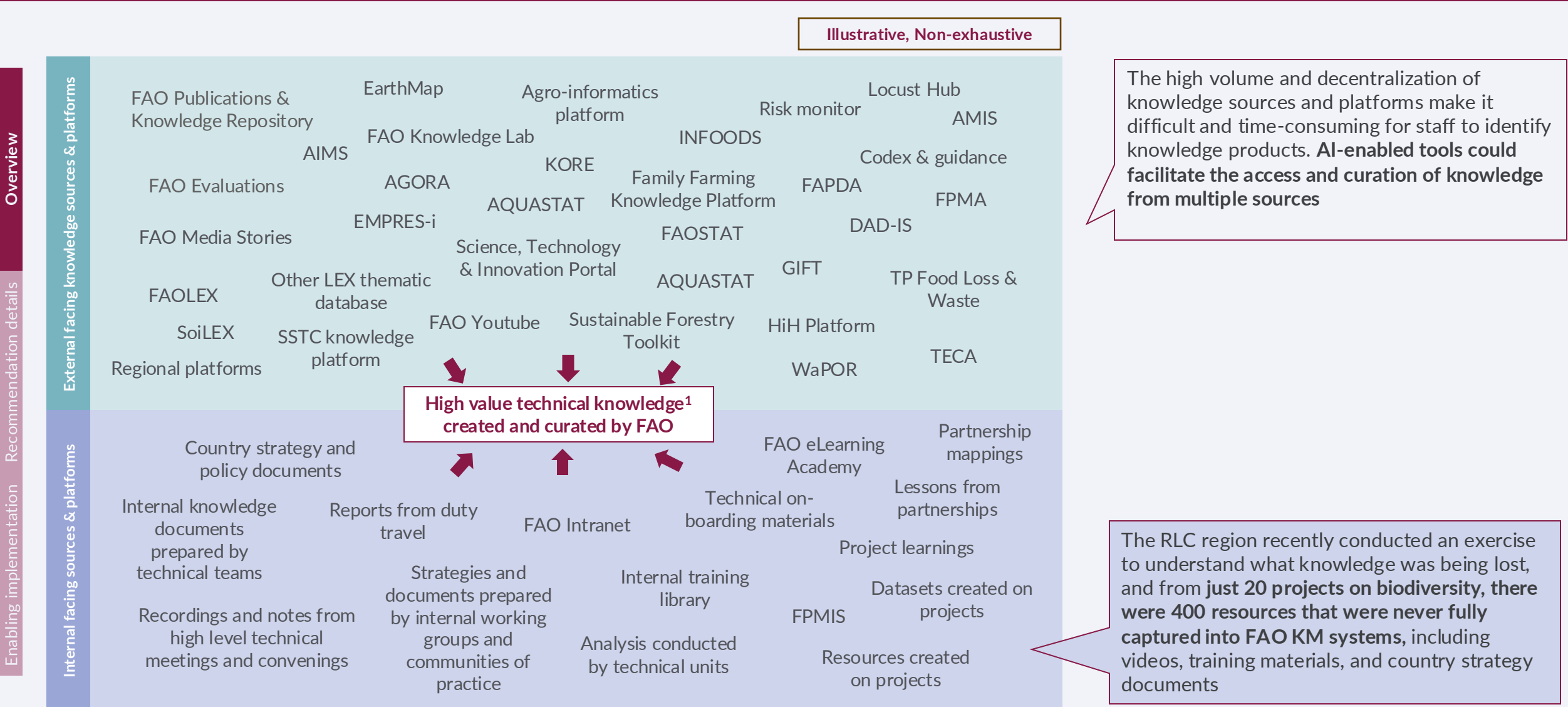
VISION OF SUCCESS

- **FAO has coordinated, integrated KM efforts and systems across the organization**
 - This reinforces FAO's role as a knowledge organization, enabling it to generate and leverage high-quality knowledge and normative guidance in support of global agrifood system transformation
- **Knowledge is consistently captured, preserved, and easily accessible to all staff**
 - Both external and internal project knowledge is not lost over time, strengthening the quality and continuity of FAO's work
- **A "One FAO" approach is enabled and reinforced through integrated KM systems**
 - Staff across headquarters, regions, and country offices draw from shared knowledge, reducing duplication and supporting coherent delivery
- **FAO has a strong culture of knowledge sharing and peer collaboration**
 - Staff proactively contribute to and draw from knowledge assets
 - KM is integrated into PEMS, creating incentives for knowledge generation and sharing

Notes: [1] High-value technical knowledge refers to the specialized and experience-derived insights that directly support FAO's normative, analytical, and operational work (see next slide);

[2] Also found in the Recommendations on Knowledge Management and Learning from Evaluations Conducted in 2023-2024 by FAO Office of Evaluations

Back up: FAO generates and curates an enormous amount of high-value technical knowledge - without a strategic effort to coordinate these, there is a risk that knowledge is lost or not used to its full potential



[1] High-value technical knowledge refers to the specialized and experience-derived insights that directly support FAO’s normative, analytical, and operational work

To support the documentation and use of high-value technical knowledge, the KM approach should be grounded in strong KM leadership, connectivity across the organization, and dedicated KM capacity

The KM framework should focus on high-value technical knowledge

High-value technical knowledge refers to the specialized and experience-derived insights that directly support FAO's normative, analytical, and operational work. It includes knowledge that strengthens decision-making, improves program design and delivery, advances technical excellence, and contributes to FAO's strategic outcomes.

This type of knowledge is:

- Technical or scientific in nature, grounded in domain expertise (e.g., animal health, agronomy, fisheries, climate adaptation, food systems)
- Relevant to FAO's mandate, PPAs, and "Better" outcomes
- Actionable, meaning it can be applied in program development, policy support, modelling, guidelines, methodologies, or field operations
- High-impact, influencing the quality, innovation, or effectiveness of FAO's work
- Context-specific, capturing lessons from country/regional experience, implementation insights, and what does/ does not work in practice
- Tacit or explicit, including know-how from experts, best practices, analytical methods, and technical tools

High-value technical knowledge does not include:

- Administrative or procedural information (e.g., procurement, HR processes)
- Corporate guidelines unrelated to technical work
- Routine operational updates
- Internal or external communications that do not contribute to technical decision-making

Elements of the KM framework

1. Leadership with clear accountability and decision rights

KM oversight should include senior leadership with the authority to set direction, make decisions, and resolve cross-organizational tensions. They must have:

- Clear decision rights on KM priorities, standards, investments, and platform choices
- Mechanisms to hold divisions accountable for implementing KM processes and staff for contributing to knowledge generation and sharing (e.g., through PEMS)
- A mandate to intervene when fragmentation, duplication, or non-adherence to KM standards occurs

2. Strong connectivity across the organization

To avoid creating additional fragmentation, the KM team should build on and connect existing KM initiatives rather than develop new, overlapping platforms

This requires a clear understanding of what already exists and strong collaboration with teams currently managing KM-related systems

It should also be connected to the different knowledge owners across the organization, both at HQ and the decentralized offices

3. Dedicated KM capacity to execute decisions and drive implementation

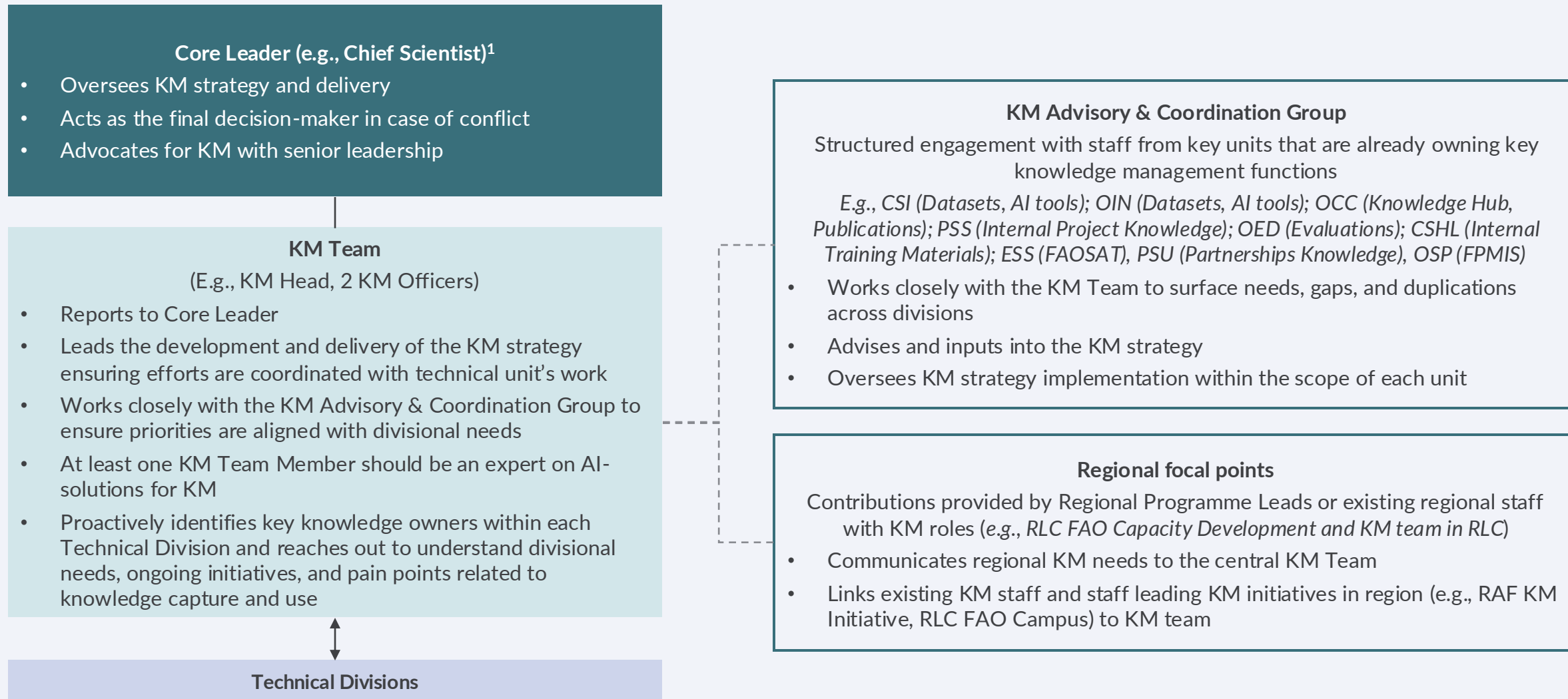
FAO Knowledge Management should be supported by a dedicated KM Team with the mandate and skills to translate decisions into action. It must have:

- Defined roles as responsibilities for delivering on the KM strategy
- Structured reporting lines and escalation pathways
- Bring experience in implementing KM in large organizations, including AI tools

This ensures that there is day-to-day delivery capacity to implement KM efforts

Oversight and endorsement is needed from senior leadership, as well as a dedicated KM Team that can work closely with owners of knowledge management across units

ILLUSTRATIVE INTEGRATED APPROACH FOR KM



Notes: [1] In many global technical organizations, responsibility for overseeing knowledge management sits under the Chief Scientist. Examples include UN agencies such as UNEP and WHO and large technical organizations outside the UN system such as CGIAR

The KM Team will jointly drive KM efforts across FAO together with key knowledge owners across the organization

Responsibilities	KM Team
Develop and deliver an FAO-wide knowledge management strategy	• Lead the development and continuous update of a FAO-wide KM strategy and ensure alignment with the “Better” pillars and PPAs • Maintain an up-to-date view of KM systems and initiatives across divisions and regions, ensuring alignment and reducing duplication • Develop a KM framework detailing the kinds of knowledge to be collected, how they will be categorized and how they flow across FAO • Define roles and responsibilities for KM across FAO teams • Provide ongoing support for KM staffing needs across divisions as needs evolve
Strengthen capture of both internal knowledge & externally shared knowledge products	• Oversee the improvement processes for consolidating, structuring, and cataloguing FAO knowledge • Ensure ongoing quality control, metadata standards, and AI-readiness of knowledge inputs • Integrate KM contribution in the project life-cycle • Regularly reach out to technical divisions to identify ongoing efforts and pain points related to knowledge capture and use
Identify, prioritize and scale AI-enabled KM solutions	• Continuously explore potential AI solutions for classification, summarization, retrieval of knowledge, and oversee their maintenance together with the advisory and coordination board • Work with technical teams to integrate AI-enabled tools with ongoing KM efforts (e.g., AI Coordination Team, NFI KM Committee) • Document and periodically share best practices for AI-enabled KM tools, using lessons from ongoing deployment
Advocate for adequate resourcing and investment in KM systems, platforms and capabilities	• Regularly assess funding needs for KM systems, tools, and staffing and advocate for sustained investment • Engage with external partners continuously to identify emerging opportunities for collaboration • Monitor and manage risks or surges in demand for KM support, adjusting contingency plans and resourcing as needed
Strengthen and coordinate mechanisms for knowledge sharing and peer learning	• Design incentives that enable knowledge generation and sharing, ensuring they remain meaningful and effective • Support integration of knowledge management contribution into staff job expectations, performance management, and PEMS • Request managers to (1) clarify with staff/NSHR when KM-related contributions are expected (e.g., documenting learnings, sharing insights, contributing to knowledge products), and (ii) provide examples during PEMS review • Establish recognition mechanisms for good KM practices (e.g., spotlighting notable KM efforts in internal communications, “KM contribution of the month”), and evolve them based on staff feedback • Continuously support and grow communities of practice (CoPs), thematic networks, and peer-learning, based on identified needs • Oversee facilitation and analytics to help maintain CoPs • Regularly deliver webinars/trainings to create a shared understanding of the KM strategy and enable staff to leverage KM tools and processes

The Advisory & Coordination Group will jointly drive KM efforts across FAO, with input from regional focal points to ensure delivery reflects regional realities

Responsibilities	KM Advisory & Coordination Group	Regional focal points
Develop and deliver an FAO-wide knowledge management strategy	• Provide inputs on divisional needs, constraints, and existing KM practices • Validate that the strategy reflects operational realities across units • Communicate the strategy within their units and ensure alignment • Identify needed competencies (e.g., data curation, UX, AI operations) to deliver on the strategy	• Communicate regional KM needs, priorities, and operational realities to the KM Team • Flag region-specific constraints or enablers that should be reflected in the strategy • Flag existing regional KM efforts that can be leveraged by FAO more widely
Strengthen capture of both internal knowledge & externally shared knowledge products	• Maintain existing knowledge repositories and tools (project knowledge, publications, datasets), owned by each division • Ensure that divisional teams adopt agreed KM processes and standards • Surface gaps, duplications, and opportunities for the KM Team	• Surface gaps, duplications, and opportunities to the KM Team
Identify, prioritize and scale AI-enabled KM solutions	• Identify divisional use cases and pain points where AI can add value for knowledge management • Support testing and adoption of KM AI solutions in their unit • Ensure unit-level compliance with data governance and ethical use standards	• Promote awareness and uptake of centrally developed AI tools within the region • Flag data governance or ethical issues arising from regional implementation
Advocate for adequate resourcing and investment in KM systems, platforms and capabilities	• Highlight resourcing needs for KM initiatives in their units to the KM team • Ensure that unit budgets include the necessary budget for KM activities (e.g., capturing and disseminating learnings)	• Communicate regional resourcing needs and constraints to the KM Team
Strengthen and coordinate mechanisms for knowledge sharing and peer learning	• Promote knowledge-sharing within their teams • Champion recognition of KM contributions in PEMS • Input into the design of webinars/ trainings on each division's tools or platforms • Flag cultural/behavioral barriers and work with the KM Team to address them	• Encourage regional participation in CoPs, thematic networks, and learning activities • Highlight support needed to strengthen knowledge sharing initiatives (e.g., CoP) in each region • Flag cultural/behavioral barriers and work with the KM Team to address them • Promote the participation of regions on webinars/ trainings on new tools and platforms

To ensure effective KM, FAO needs to ensure clear, empowered leadership, a shared vision and roadmap, sustained investment, a supportive culture, and continuous measurement and learning

Enabling conditions for success	Critical enablers required
1. Ensure leadership buy-in	• Integrate KM priorities into senior management agendas, regional meetings, and strategic updates • Communicate to Core Leadership the KM priorities and how they fit into FAO’s wider strategy • Provide leaders with simple talking points so they can explain the importance of KM clearly and consistently to their teams
2. Drive awareness and shared understanding of KM value and expectations	• Launch internal communication campaigns to explain why KM matters and how it improves daily work • Promote KM tools, good practices, and success stories across regions and divisions – showcasing examples of knowledge products, innovations, or lessons learned that demonstrate the value of contributing to and using KM systems and platforms • Set clear KM expectations and communicate what good KM looks like, use KM platforms visibly, and signal that documenting and sharing knowledge is part of core work, and that it is integrated into performance management
3. Equip staff with skills and process to contribute to KM	• Provide training and capability-building on KM processes, tools, and AI-enabled solutions for knowledge generation, access and leveraging • Link tutorials and guidance for KM processes, tools and AI-enabled solutions to the FAO intranet • Communicate to staff who they should contact in case of challenges with KM processes, tools, and AI-enabled solutions (e.g., the KM staff in their region, regional focal points)
5. Ensure continuous measurement and learning to improve KM	• Monitor KPIs and metrics for KM platforms and activities (usage statistics, contribution rates, satisfaction, CoP engagement) • Implement feedback loops to gather insights from users and adjust KM tools, processes, and governance accordingly

Case study: IOM's Knowledge Management Strategy (2024–2028)



THE NEED

- Knowledge is a core asset for IOM and its key comparative advantage – IOM relies on the expertise and experience of staff, partners and stakeholders to deliver on its mandate
- Migration is a multifaceted challenge, requiring a holistic understanding and access to data across many areas of expertise to drive valuable insights
- IOM needed a coherent approach to manage and consolidate expertise existing in a highly decentralized organization with over 20,000 staff across 171 offices

KEY ELEMENTS OF IOM KM APPROACH

Clear strategic vision that positions knowledge and learning culture as a core organizational asset

- Positions knowledge as a core organizational asset essential for mandate delivery, being identified as key areas of institutional investment in the IOM Strategic Vision 2019-2023.
- Articulates a vision: “IOM leverages cutting-edge knowledge and strategic insight to benefit migrants and societies” and defines strategic outcomes and outputs. The two outcomes are:
 - i. Develop a dynamic and people-centered knowledge ecosystem that promotes a culture of learning and innovation
 - ii. Provide world-class knowledge to drive transformative solutions and innovation with partners and stakeholders

A coherent and ambitious digital architecture that connects 30+ platforms into a unified KM ecosystem

- Maps and links more than 30 existing knowledge platforms (e.g., POEM, Migration Network Hub) with strong ambitions for digital solutions, including through AI-assisted search

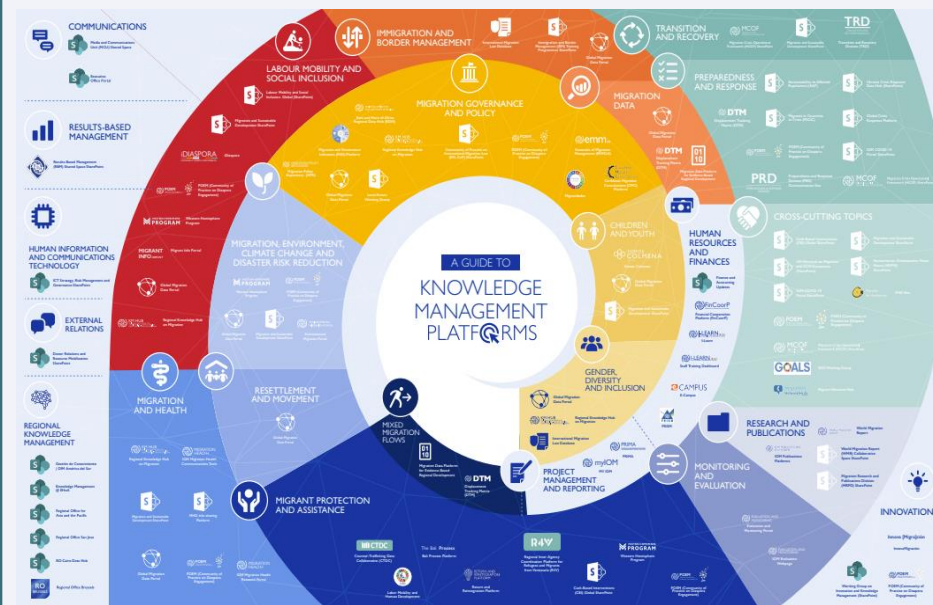
A culture of learning and knowledge sharing, which is enabled by incentives and strong leadership, peer-learning mechanisms and a people directory

- Proposes culture shift promoted through recognition and acknowledgement of KM contributions, incentives (e.g., integrating knowledge-sharing into performance assessment systems and linking it to career development, adequate processes (e.g., integration of KM in staff journey from onboarding to handover), leadership modeling, and raising awareness on the value of KM
- Emphasizes role of Communities of Practice, expert networks, and peer-learning mechanisms (e.g., storytelling, knowledge cafés, peer assists, after-action reviews)
- Sets out to develop a directory to easily find experts in the Organization and launch a knowledge-sharing help desk to support staff members in finding solutions and better connect them

Dedicated KM capacity anchored in a central KM unit and supported by global champions to ensure connectivity across the organization

- A central IKM Unit leads implementation. The IKM Unit is in the Department of Data, Insight and Policy Coordination (DIPC) under the mandate of the Deputy Directory General for Operations
- A Working Group on Knowledge Management and Innovation exists to identify key priorities for the knowledge management and innovation work of IOM
- Geographical distributed champions who work as knowledge connectors and support CoPs

IOM KM internal and external platforms mapping, developed by IKM Unit



Transferable insights

- Position KM as a strategic priority
- Establish clear KM framework, roles and responsibilities
- Identify and map KM platforms for coherence
- Emphasize tacit knowledge and peer learning
- Recognize culture building as key to enabling strategy

Case study: International Labor Organization (ILO) use of AI for Knowledge Management



THE NEED

- Staff had limited time to extract insights from long evaluation reports and policy documents, despite these containing high-value knowledge
- Knowledge retrieval processes were highly inefficient due to fragmented systems, outdated KM structures, and weak search functions
- ILO faced organization-wide gaps in AI and data-handling skills, constraining its ability to modernize knowledge access

KEY ELEMENTS OF ILO'S USE OF AI FOR KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

ILO leadership provided momentum and buy-in for AI initiatives across the organization

- The Director-General launched an organization-wide innovation call, mandating Infotech to identify AI use cases that could improve efficiency and knowledge retrieval
- The DG allocated an initial budget to Infotech and invited all departments to submit AI project proposals; Infotech was tasked with selecting scalable pilots
- Departments also allocated departmental budgets to their AI initiatives to complement central funding
- AI initiatives were embedded within the innovation strategy (output A.3), ensuring institutional and budgetary relevancies

Selected AI pilots were launched to address high-value KM needs (non-exhaustive examples below)

- i-eval Discovery: Evaluation Department & Infotech created an AI bot trained on evaluation reports to extract lessons learned and make insights accessible
- Employment Policy Chatbot: Using the same stack, Employment Policy developed an LLM trained on 11,000+ documents, covering two decades of employment policy guidance

In-house capacity is being built to support AI knowledge management efforts, both by ensuring staff have AI skills, access to AI tools, and hiring dedicated AI specialists

- An AI learning journey training was developed for both more foundational and advanced users and will train over 200 colleagues initially (led by the HR department)
- ILO is considering, in the medium-term, bringing in AI and data management expertise including for knowledge management through dedicated roles
- ILO surveyed all staff to understand which tools were required in different departments, and across grades to ensure access – extending access to ChatGPT in some units, in others Copilot

IMPACT ON TECHNICAL CAPACITY:

Staff have cited many examples, including:

- Supporting technical work (e.g., using AI tools to suggest a roadmap for developing employment policies, based on previous case studies and research conducted)
- Reducing time spent on document review (freeing time for higher-value technical tasks)
- Faster preparation of diagnostics, talking points, and policy advice for countries.

TRANSFERABLE INSIGHTS

- AI-enabled retrieval tools meaningfully reduce search burden and can improve consistency of technical guidance
- Leadership buy-in and ability to channel sustained funding is key to progress on AI initiatives for KM
- Close collaboration between technical and service departments ensures that i) AI tools are directed toward the most pressing knowledge needs and remain coherent across the organization, and ii) other divisions can proactively support, scale, and sustain these efforts

Executive Summary

1. Recommendations Overview

2. Recommendations Details

- **Must-have**

- AI-enabled people directory searchable by expertise and skillset
- Dedicated KM team, oversight, and governance framework

- **Strengthened performance management, incentives, and consequences**

- Complement to on-going people initiatives
- Pilot

3. Communications Approach

4. MEL Approach

Annex



FAO can strengthen performance incentives and consequences to improve quality of in-house expertise by ensuring best practices are incorporated into future PEMS policies (to support on-going PEMS reform led by HR)

SITUATION AND CHALLENGE

- **In practice, PEMS reviews do not sufficiently differentiate performance.** Although the current PEMS policy formally requires annual objective-setting, mid-year check-ins, final performance ratings and development plans, the resulting ratings are heavily concentrated (~94–96% of staff rated as fully meeting or exceeding expectations), offering little differentiation. Managers expressed reticence to give critical feedback in reviews, for fear of staff rebuttal, legal retaliation, and deteriorating team dynamics.
- **PEMS outputs rarely lead to concrete decisions or consequences.** In practice, WIGSI and conversions to continuing contracts are almost automatic, and staff reported perceiving them as hard to counter on performance grounds. This further discourages managers from investing time in using the system rigorously. In particular, staff noted that:
 - High performance is not linked to advancement opportunities or other rewards/benefits, which can disincentivize high performance
 - Underperforming staff are often neither dismissed nor systematically given support to improve, limiting technical capacity of teams
- **HR are currently working on an updated PEMS policy**, with key revisions aimed at addressing these challenges

RECOMMENDATION

- **Ensure the updated PEMS policy under development by HR provides a clear, differentiated performance framework, and explicitly links ratings to consequences** (development support, recognition, contract decisions), including by:
 - **Directly interfacing PEMS with other people processes** (learning and staff development funds, mobility, contract renewal, conversion to continuing, WIGSI), **identifying the respective roles of HR, SSC and line management**
- **Provide support to managers to enable them to better support their teams**, so they provide high-quality quality feedback and take accountability for staff development

VISION OF SUCCESS

- **PEMS reviews accurately reflect performance** and distinguish high and low performing staff
- **Underperformance is addressed early** with structured support
- **High performers are recognized in ways that matter** (development opportunities)
- **Staff see a transparent link between objectives, feedback, development plans and career opportunities**, increasing trust in the fairness of people decisions
- **Senior leadership uses PEMS data to steer talent decisions** (renewals, mobility, succession) **and to target learning and workforce planning**, in line with the HR Strategy and Action Plan's call for stronger linkages between performance, learning and recognition

FAO’s future PEMS policy should anchor reviews in competency-based expectations, broader peer input, and sharper use of the rating scale

Elements and best practices that can be considered for future PEMS policies and performance management processes

Component	Description
Systematically assess competencies from the FAO competency framework with expectations varying by grade and level	• Ensure evidence-backed evaluation of key competencies from the FAO competency framework at each grade and level by: • Revising the FAO competency framework to introduce levels for each competency and ensure that priorities for building technical capacity (e.g., KM contributions, engagement with partners, contributions to work of other teams) are considered as part of competencies in the framework • Providing guidance to supervisors to identify key competencies relevant to their supervisees from the framework, and evaluate them against the desired level description of each competency for their given role
Require broader peer inputs	• Mandate a specific multirater inputs based on the individual’s role and job description (e.g., 1 manager, 1 subordinate, 1 external partner, 1 collaborator from another unit), to ensure broader peer inputs can be leveraged to provide greater objectivity in cases of disagreement between managers and staff and reduce burden on managers to act as sole source of critical feedback in cases of low ratings
Sharper application of the PEMS rating scale	• Strengthen manager capability to accurately review low performers through mandatory supervisor training on (i) using the full scale (including when to give 1–2), (ii) documenting evidence, and (iii) holding difficult feedback conversations, complemented by targeted “clinics” and 1:1 coaching for complex performance cases • Provide specific guidance with concrete examples of how performance against expected competency levels should translate to PEMS rating (especially 1–3), and what evidence is required, empowering managers to point to clear expectations to justify and differentiate PEMS ratings

FAO’s future PEMS policy should embed structured calibration processes to ensure consistent, evidence-based ratings across divisions and offices

Elements and best practices that can be considered for future PEMS policies and performance management processes

Component	Description
Calibration processes	• In two phases, introduce a process to review and calibrate ratings across entire divisions/offices through divisional and office-level calibration discussions, with light-touch supervision by HR, building a common understanding of what good looks like and ensuring sufficient variety in scores: • Phase 1: Pilot calibration process for a limited set of divisions and/or offices: • Equip calibration sessions with simple tools (e.g., example rating distributions, reference ranges by grade/role, anonymized cases) to support implementation of consistent standards across teams • Offer first-hand coaching for a pilot group of managers – potentially engaging a neutral third party – who can sit in (with consent) on calibration and performance/development discussions, review written PEMS language, and give specific, practical feedback on how to frame evaluations and growth plans. • Track outcomes from this pilot (e.g., differentiation of scores, quality of reviews, staff perceptions, follow-through on development plans) • Phase 2: Extend calibration process to all divisions and/or offices: • Use insights from the pilot to design a scaling approach, that may include: • Providing targeted PEMS calibration training for supervisors, alongside leadership and people-management trainings focused on (i) coaching and feedback, (ii) high-quality performance and development conversations, and (iii) concrete options for supporting and rewarding staff (e.g., use of staff development funds, stretch assignments, mentoring). • Showcasing good practice (e.g., short cases where managers used PEMS plus learning tools to help staff grow) • Leveraging good managers from the pilot as role models and peer mentors to spread effective behaviors regarding PEMS calibration and performance management in teams across the organization • Flag outlier units where there is a risk of rating inflation (e.g., no 1–2s, >50% of staff rated 5) through routine HR analysis of PEMS score data at the organization level and follow up with targeted coaching and support to help those managers apply the scale more accurately • This analysis of rating distribution can be shared with Core Leaders and Regional Representatives (ideally before scores are finalized) to give them visibility of how managers in their streams are scoring, and follow-up as needed • Require further confirmation/justification from division directors to finalize scores of teams that still vary significantly from the expected distribution of scores (e.g., no staff scoring below 4 in teams of 10 or more), to avoid score inflation and set expectation that ratings on the lower end of the scale are to be used

FAO’s future PEMS policy and performance management approach should clarify how divergent performance is handled, with clear rewards for high performers and progressive responses to underperformance

Elements and best practices that can be considered for future PEMS policies and performance management processes

Component	Description
Clearer dispute handling guidance	• Reduce frictions that can prevent constructive reviews from being submitted, including by: • Introducing a deadline for automatic escalation of unfinalized reviews to the second-level manager, to avoid disagreements leading to stalled reviews • Ensuring reviews cannot be blocked by staff member if 1st & 2nd level supervisors agree • Establishing a simple, time-bound process for handling rating disputes and rebuttals in case of continuing disagreement, with clarity on who is able to overrule whom under which conditions
Recognition of successful performance	• The policy should provide and mandate a range of rewards and career development mechanisms that are triggered by strong performance, such as active recommendation needed to be eligible for WIGSI, or priority consideration from managers for access to staff development funds or mobility opportunities
Progressive options to address underperformance	• Provide and mandate a range of tools and mechanisms to support or dismiss underperforming staff, appropriate for different levels and types of performance challenges, including: • increased frequency of performance check-ins • targeted trainings and learning opportunities • time-bound performance improvement plans with clear objectives • ineligibility for WIGSI or conversion to continuing contracts • launch of dismissal process

HR teams should actively support managers to put underperforming staff on **performance improvement plans that include a higher frequency of rated performance reviews** over a defined period. In cases of continued underperformance, these reviews enable an effective dismissal process if needed.

FAO’s future performance management approach should align PEMS timelines with contract, WIGSI and learning processes so performance evidence reliably drives people decisions

Elements and best practices that can be considered for future PEMS policies and performance management processes

Component	Description
PEMS-adjacent people processes aligned with PEMS timelines	• Synchronize PEMS timelines with WIGSI, contract renewal and conversion cycles so that appraisals finalized sufficiently far in advance can be considered in decisions • Require PEMS review completion & consultation as an active step prior to WIGSI, renewals, or conversions to continuing contracts, with consultation of PEMS narrative as a formal step before approval • Introduce PEMS-related triggers into learning framework, automatically requiring certain learning steps for staff with specific PEMS scores or notes in their PEMS reviews, to quickly deliver support to staff facing key performance challenges and reduce manual work for managers

Overview

Recommendation details

Enabling implementation

To enable the success of a future PEMS policy and performance management approach, managers must be supported to better build their staff’s performance, and their efforts must be monitored and recognized

Enabling conditions for success	Critical enablers required	
1. Managers are willing to use the full ratings scale, and staff do not view lower scores primarily as a path to dismissal	• Establish and strengthen norm of lower ratings used to inform staff development plans and support improvement, and not just to justify dismissals, including through: • Transparent communication to staff and managers concerning expected performance improvement and support for staff receiving lower scores • Role modelling from senior leadership on use of differentiated ratings across the full scale • Clearly communicate the purpose of rebuttal processes (internally and before any escalation to ILOAT) to ensure accurate and fair reviews, rather than to punish or harm specific managers or staff, including by clarifying the role of HR and what support is available to managers and staff to resolve disputes across all levels of escalation	FAO will need to build a track record of lower ratings leading to staff development rather than dismissal to encourage trust between managers and staff and effectively change norms on the use of lower scores
2. Manager’s efforts in performance management is monitored and recognized	• Ensure managers’ performance as supervisors and career development coaches (e.g., differentiation of ratings, effective tracking of evidence, ability to hold difficult conversations with team members when needed, positive staff experiences being supported with underperformance) is considered as part of their performance reviews by encouraging assessment against relevant competencies from the competency framework (once revised) • Make sound performance management a criterion for access to more senior management positions (e.g., evidence of differentiated ratings, documented development of staff, strong handling of underperformance) • Identify managers that are struggling to support the development of their teams and support them with targeted training, or HR team support during calibrations or other people discussions	

Case study: Performance Management at UNICEF



- UNICEF's global Competency Framework, first published in 2020, provides a unified standard for assessing how staff contribute to organizational results. It defines the core behaviors expected of all personnel, regardless of contract type or role, and clarifies how these expectations evolve across three assessment levels: individual contributor, team manager, and manager of multiple teams
- The framework serves as the foundation for performance management, talent development, and leadership accountability across UNICEF, ensuring staff demonstrate the competencies needed to deliver impact for children

Staff assessment levels	Performance expectations	Competency areas assessed
• Individual contributor (Level 1): Colleagues without people management responsibility, who are accountable for their own individual performance and their contribution to the outputs of the team. • Team manager (Level 2): Applies to all colleagues who have operational and functional responsibility for a team. Manages individual and team performance. • Manager of multiple teams: (Level 3): Applies to senior colleagues with responsibility and accountability for multiple teams	• The levels are cumulative, and all colleagues, regardless of contract type, job role, or grade level, are expected to demonstrate the core behaviors outlined in level 1. This means that: • Team Managers at level 2 are expected to demonstrate the behaviors outlined in both levels 1 and 2 • Managers of Multiple Teams at level 3 are expected to demonstrate the behaviors outlined in all three levels	1. Builds and maintains partnerships 2. Demonstrates self-awareness and ethical awareness 3. Drive to achieve results for impact 4. Innovates and embraces change 5. Manages ambiguity and complexity 6. Thinks and acts strategically 7. Works collaboratively with others 8. Nurthers, leads and manages people (only for managers/supervisors)

Competency Area 1: Definition and performance expectations per level

Builds and maintains partnerships

Definition: Build a network of external stakeholders and alliances with government counterparts, civil society, the media and the private sector, in order to promote and advance the work of the organization.

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Individual contributor	Team manager	Manager of multiple teams
THE ABILITY TO: • Develop a network of formal and informal contacts through participation in professional networks or consultations with others. • Adopt a consultative approach and solicit the support of key stakeholders at critical stages of one's work. • Act as a role model for UNICEF, strengthening the reputation of the organization.	THE ABILITY TO: • Collaborate with other UN entities, public and private sector partners, sharing knowledge and contributing to best practice. • Advocate, influence and negotiate reflecting the needs of children, women and young people in discussions with key decision makers. • Promote and select partners who share UNICEF's values. • Ensure that feedback from key stakeholders is incorporated into programme design, implementation and team learning.	THE ABILITY TO: • Initiate new partnerships, including with the private sector and media. • Anticipate changing priorities, working with partners to create long-term and sustainable opportunities. • Act as a credible and convincing spokesperson and negotiator for UNICEF.

Competency expectations change according to the level of the employee

Executive Summary

1. Recommendations Overview

2. Recommendations Details

- Must-have
- Complement to on-going people initiatives
- Fixed-term contracts used as the long-term contract modality
- Greater voluntary staff mobility
- Selective and strategic use of HQ-reporting posts located in DOs
- Pilot

3. Communications Approach

4. MEL Approach

Annex



Establishing fixed-term contracts as the long-term contract modality for ongoing positions can strengthen balance of stability and flexibility in FAO's contract offering to improve the quality of in-house expertise

SITUATION AND CHALLENGE

- **Staff reported that, in practice, continuing contracts can constrain workforce decisions.** ~19% of FAO's PWB staff is on continuing contracts, which:
 - staff perceive as more difficult to dismiss on performance grounds
 - can reduce managers willingness to reprofile or abolish posts to free up resources for new priorities, due to perceptions around the effort needed to consider the person for redeployment
 - *See back up contract differences as per Staff Manual*
- **Staff reported that positions which are needed on an ongoing basis, but are filled by consultancy contracts, can weaken continuity.** ~17% of human resources are on consultancy contracts, including many which staff cited as fulfilling ongoing, staff-like functions. In these contexts, use of consultancy contracts can:
 - put institutional knowledge at risk when consultants leave or reach the consecutive contract limit, requiring a mandatory break
 - tightly constrain what individuals can work on, given narrow ToRs and limited mobility across functions/duty stations
 - generate recurring indirect administrative costs for hiring, onboarding and training
 - be perceived as inequitable towards those occupying these positions

RECOMMENDATION

- **Gradually shift towards using fixed-term renewable staff contracts** with no automatic conversion to continuing contracts for staff posts, and for roles currently filled through NSHRs on consultancy contracts, but performing "staff like" duties, by:
 - **no longer offering conversion to continuing contracts to new hires**, acknowledging that processes for existing continuing contracts and staff on fixed term contracts already working at FAO before the policy change remain unchanged
 - **identifying and offering fixed-term contracts to replace long-standing consultancy roles** that (i) perform ongoing, core staff-like functions, and (ii) are likely to be needed over several biennia

Compared to continuing contracts, fixed-term staff contracts can offer similar practical job security for staff whose performance remains satisfactory (given FAO's Staff Regulations and ILOAT case law)¹, while allowing the organization to dismiss underperformers slightly more quickly, and giving the organization more flexibility to refresh the workforce when restructuring.

Compared to consultancy contracts², fixed-term staff contracts strengthen continuity and institutional knowledge, allow managers to deploy staff more flexibly beyond narrow ToRs (including across duty stations), and reduce the repeated transaction costs of hiring, onboarding and training for roles that are in effect ongoing.

VISION OF SUCCESS

- **A clearer contract architecture**, where most core functions are staffed on renewable fixed-term contracts, and longer-term continuity is transparently linked to sustained performance, funding and organizational needs.
- **Stronger protection of FAO's institutional knowledge**, as roles needed on an ongoing basis are filled by individuals on fixed term staff contracts with incentives to stay, learn and contribute across workstreams.
- **Greater ability for managers to shape high-performing teams over time**, including reprofiling roles, redirecting capacity to emerging priorities and addressing persistent underperformance, within a rules-based framework that remains stable for staff

1. Under ILOAT case law and FAO's Staff Regulations, non-renewal of fixed-term contracts is only lawful where (i) funds are no longer available, (ii) the post is no longer needed, or (iii) performance is duly documented as unsatisfactory. If PEMS ratings remain inflated and weakly evidenced, fixed-term contracts become de facto permanent and lose their value as a workforce-management tool

2. Where funding and legal frameworks allow, similar principles could gradually be extended to long-standing staff-like NPP roles, while recognizing that some posts will need to remain contracted as NPPs to allow specific projects to hire under national labor-law modalities.

FAO should make fixed-term contracts the default for ongoing staff roles and progressively shift core functions away from consultancy arrangements

Key elements of transition to fixed-term contracts

Component	Description	
Reposition continuing contracts as a legacy modality	- Formally state that no future hires will be converted to continuing contracts, and that long-term job security will instead be provided through successive fixed-term renewals, subject to performance, funding and organizational need - Manage existing continuing contract staff, and fixed term contracts staff entitled to conversion to continuing contracts, through natural attrition (retirements, voluntary departures) and targeted measures (e.g., voluntary separation schemes where justified), avoiding disruptive forced changes	The FAO can decide to no longer offer conversion to continuing contracts after 5 years to new hires. However: - existing continuing contracts cannot be changed - any staff on fixed term contracts already working at the organization before the change in policy is entitled to conversion as per the original policy at the start of their employment
Agree and codify scope and criteria for use of fixed-term contracts	- Define multi-year fixed-term renewable staff contracts as the default modality for positions needed on an ongoing basis, especially PWB-posts and Regular Programme Budget posts that require institutional continuity and the ability to redeploy over time. - Clarify when other modalities remain appropriate, such as: - Short, clearly time-bounded or highly specialized resources (consultancies). - Use of national modalities required by trust-fund conditions (with the understanding that long-standing staff-like NPP roles should still be managed with continuity and workforce flexibility in mind).	
Assess the baseline contract mix and develop a workforce transition plan	- Map the current workforce by contract type, grade, function and location to identify long-standing consultancy roles that (i) perform ongoing, core staff-like functions, and (ii) are likely to be needed over several biennia - Develop a multi-biennium transition roadmap that links creation/reprofiling of posts, expected attrition, and budget evolution to a gradual increase in fixed-term coverage	
Offer fixed-term contracts to replace long-standing consultancy roles	Create or re-advertise posts for roles needed on an ongoing basis but currently performed by individuals on consulting contracts, to gradually shift towards such posts being filled by staff on fixed-term renewable contracts, starting with roles most critical to institutional knowledge and technical delivery.	FAO may further reduce the limit on consecutive consultancy contracts to organically encourage the use more fixed-term over consultancy contracts for roles they expect to need for longer periods

To ensure contracting decisions are predictable and performance-based, FAO should embed guidance on the fixed-term contract modality in the hiring processes, staff communications and PEMS

Enabling conditions for success	Critical enablers required	
1. PEMS provides reliable evidence to underpin renewal or non-renewal and support decisions	- Strengthen PEMS guidance and practice so that ratings are more accurate and better documented allowing them to be used reliably to inform contract decisions (renewal, non-renewal, or intensified support) - Encourage managers to use mid-term reviews and early performance signals (e.g., ~6 months before contract end) to flag cases where non-renewal is a possibility, allowing time for due process, support measures (incl. performance improvement plans), and clear communication with staff	Accurate and duly completed PEMS reviews are a cornerstone of effective use of fixed-term contracts (see deep dive on restrictions on non-renewal): - If PEMS ratings are inflated, late, or weakly evidenced (including due to a lack of mid-term reviews and early performance signals), non-renewal on performance grounds cannot be actioned for staff on fixed-term contracts - For fixed term contracts to facilitate consequences for underperforming staff, FAO must ensure robust, timely, procedurally sound performance management and documentation so non-renewal decisions can stand.
2. Hiring managers understand and are supported to apply the desired contracting guidelines consistently	- Issue concise HR guidance and a “contract landscape” one-pager explaining: - When to use fixed-term staff contracts versus NSHR modalities - Clear guidance that continuing contracts will not be offered to new staff - The status of existing continuing contracts and staff with entitlement to convert to continuing contracts - Provide targeted briefings for Directors, FAORs and HR focal points to clarify expectations and answer practical questions - Offer opportunities for hiring managers to work through contracting decisions with HR focal points, acknowledging budget implications of contract choice and agreeing gradual steps to change the contract mix within their teams - Consider checks for contract type use in recruitment workflows and approvals (e.g., providing HR with guidelines for identifying and advising on optimal contract modality)	
3. Staff and staff representatives see the model as predictable, rules-based and oriented to institutional continuity	- Engage staff associations early to explain: - The rationale (fairness, protection of institutional knowledge, clearer link organizational needs). - The safeguards (renewal expectations where performance and funding are satisfactory; continued due-process protections). - Emphasize that the reform also aims to reduce use of consultancy arrangements for core positions needed on an ongoing basis and improves clarity on long-term prospects for high-performing staff. - Provide FAQs and regular updates (e.g., town halls, intranet pages) to address concerns, including misconceptions that fixed-term contracts are inherently less secure than continuing contracts when properly managed.	

To ensure a successful transition, FAO should track workforce impacts and iteratively refine the fixed-term approach based on evidence

Enabling conditions for success	Critical enablers required
4. FAO monitors workforce shifts and iterates the approach based on evidence	• Establish a small task team (potentially including staff from HR) to track the evolution of the contract mix and review that this mix is fit-for-purpose, including: • Shifts in the distribution of contract types in core roles. • Trends in fixed-term renewals / non-renewals, appeals and tribunal cases. • Turnover, vacancy durations and indicators of institutional knowledge loss or retention. • Review data annually to check whether workforce-mix targets are being met and whether any unintended consequences are emerging (e.g., higher turnover in critical roles). • Adjust guidance, training and pacing of the transition as needed, while maintaining alignment with FAO Staff Regulations, ILOAT case law and the overarching objectives of fairness, flexibility and protection of institutional knowledge

Back up: Necessary conditions for separation of staff under continuing vs fixed-term contracts

	Continuing contracts (~19% of PWB staff)	Fixed-term contracts (~81% of PWB staff)
Separation due to lacking possibility for redeployment in cases of post abolition	“In all instances of reduction of posts the Organization shall make every reasonable effort to ensure that affected staff members with continuing [...] appointments [...] are suitably placed elsewhere in the Organization” “Such effort includes referral of the case to the appropriate Redeployment Task Force for consideration before any formal notice of termination is given to the staff member concerned” - If no redeployment is possible (all efforts exhausted) then staff “may be separated in accordance with Staff Rule 302.9.112, irrespective of type of appointment”	For staff with more than 5 years of continuous uninterrupted service: Same protections as continuing appointment All other staff: No strict protection – contract is simply not renewed due to post being abolished Note: Even without protection, “it is the general policy of the Organization, wherever possible, to retain and utilize the services of staff members with satisfactory competence and conduct”
Separation due to unsatisfactory service	- Allowed “for failure to perform prescribed duties in a satisfactory manner” - Interpreted as cases in which, if “after successive transfers, satisfactory service and harmonious working relationships have not resulted” - Requires “written statement setting forth the specific reasons for the action [...] prepared by the department head, office head, or the division director concerned”	Non-renewal of contract is permitted in cases of PEMS scores of 1 or 2 without demonstrated improvement in performance, according to PEMS policy: “Overall performance ratings of “partially meets performance expectations” (2) or “does not meet performance expectations” (1) indicate that the staff member is under-performing. As provided in the Administrative Manual, failure to demonstrate improved performance may lead to non-conversion to continuing status as well as non-extension of a fixed-term appointment or termination of appointment”

The two grounds for separation of staff presented here are entirely distinct and should not be conflated. Separation due to lacking possibility for redeployment in cases of post abolition is intended only for cases in which a post-holder’s technical expertise is no longer needed anywhere within the organization, and as such does not consider staff performance and should not be seen as a mechanisms to achieve separation of underperforming staff.

Deep dive: Changing tribunal would be unlikely to materially change the process of or burden of proof needed for non-renewal of fixed-term contracts

ILOAT's applies FAO rules, with limited review: ILOAT applies FAO's Staff Regulations and Rules, checking mainly for errors of law or fact, abuse of authority, or breaches of procedure/form.

Under ILOAT interpretation, non-renewal of fixed-term contracts is lawful only in narrow, defined cases – making PEMS quality critical: Under FAO's framework as interpreted by ILOAT, non-renewal is only allowed where (i) funds are no longer available, (ii) the post is no longer needed, or (iii) unsatisfactory performance is duly documented

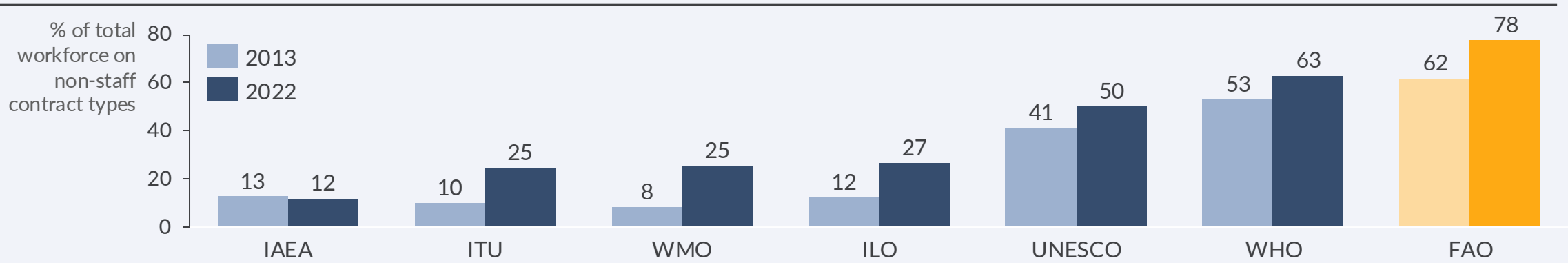
Changing tribunal (e.g. to UNAT/WBAT) would not reduce the burden of proof for non-renewal or dismissal. The other available tribunals (UNAT and WBAT) have not shown greater leniency on non-renewal cases than ILOAT. UN organizations that have left ILOAT have done so due to historic differences in remedies used: ILOAT previously ordered reinstatement of wrongfully dismissed staff, whereas UNAT has relied on financial compensation only. However today, ILOAT also mainly uses financial remedies.

As a result, accurate and duly completed PEMS reviews are a cornerstone of effective use of fixed-term contracts:

- If PEMS ratings are inflated, late, or weakly evidenced (including due to a lack of mid-term reviews and early performance signals), non-renewal on performance grounds cannot be actioned for staff on fixed-term contracts
- For fixed term contracts to facilitate consequences for underperforming staff, FAO must ensure robust, timely, procedurally sound performance management and documentation so non-renewal decisions can stand

Benchmark: Use of non-staff human resources and conditions of consultancy contracts across UN specialized agencies

FAO has a greater proportion of non-staff human resources than other UN specialized agencies, and experienced one of the largest rises in % of total workforce on non-staff contract types



Agencies differ on limits provided for non-staff contract types, including on total months engaged or length of mandatory breaks

	IAEA	ITU	WMO	ILO	UNESCO	WHO	FAO
Max duration of consulting contracts	• 12 months	• Flexible	• 24 months	External collaborators/service providers are not hired under maximum duration contracts (no limit on length of consultancy style engagement)	• 11 months	• 11 months (22 months for on-site consultants)	• 11 months
Mandatory break in 12-month period	• None	• None	• None		• 1 month	• 1 month	• 1 month
Limit on total months engaged	• 24 months of aggregate service (12-month break required)	• None	• 24 months in a 36-month period (12-month break required)		• None	• No renewal in same department beyond 22 months in 24-month period (3 –month break before joining different department required)	• 33 months in a 36-month period (6-month break required)

Benchmark: Use of continuing appointment modality and conversion to continuing appointment for fixed-term staff across UN and specialised agencies

Many UN agencies do not make use of the continuing appointment modality

- For example, UNHCR decided to introduce fixed-term appointments up to 3 years for longer durations, rather than continuing appointments, to maintain flexibility¹

Some specialized agencies which used to have conversion to continuing appointments for FT staff have discontinued this to improve workforce flexibility and tie contracting more closely to performance:

- UNESCO discontinued use in 2002⁴ given need for flexibility and room for rejuvenation of technical experts¹.

“considering UNESCO programme life cycles, financial constraints and the need for flexibility and room for staff rejuvenation, continuing appointments are not relevant” and “that, considering the highly specialised fields of UNESCO activities, employing experts on a continuous basis is counterproductive given that employees with scientific profiles tend to disconnect from their respective scientific/academic/research fields and lose competencies if they remain with the organization for an extended period of time” – 2016 ISC report

- WHO discontinued in 2013, including because the criteria for continuing appointments at organization lacked an assessment of merit.¹ As of 2016 80% of WHO staff were on continuing appointments¹

Other organizations have the option of conversion with active review (i.e., the decision is not tenure based, and active review and endorsement is needed for conversion), making it a stronger performance incentive:

- At IFAD an internal panel reviews staff before conversion to indefinite appointment, and status is then reassessed after 5 years to confirm suitability.¹ Eligibility for first consideration starts at 7 years.
- ICAO introduced stricter criteria, as well as a cap of up to one third of its workforce for conversion to continuing contracts in 2014.

Among the remaining organizations that still have conversion, some are also now considering removing continuing contracts:

- ITU is reviewing its contract architecture following continuing appointments reaching 70% in 2016, as they were considered as depriving the organization of the flexibility necessary for making adjustments to the workforce¹

Use of continuing (permanent/indefinite) contract types at selected UN agencies

	FT contracts convert to continuing	Details
UNHCR	No	• Has not made use of continuing appointment modality ¹
UNFPA	No	• Has not made use of continuing appointment modality ¹
UNESCO	No	• Discontinued conversion in 2002 ⁴ due to need for flexibility and rejuvenation ¹
WHO	No	• Removed conversion in 2013 due to lack of merit assessment ¹
IOM	No	• Does not make use of continuing appointment modality ⁶
UNICEF	No	• Has not made use of continuing appointment modality ¹
UN WOMEN	No	• Has not made use of continuing appointment modality ¹
UNOPS	No	• Has not made use of continuing appointment modality ¹
ICAO	With active review	• Continuing appointments are subject to Council-approved criteria and an overall cap of up to one third of the workforce, since 2014 ¹
IFAD	With active review	• Internal panel reviews staff before conversion to indefinite appointment, and status is reassessed after 5 years to confirm suitability ¹
ITU	Currently under revision ⁵	• Continuing appointments reached 70% in 2016 and were considered as depriving the organization of the flexibility necessary for making adjustments to the workforce ¹
FAO	Yes	• Staff convert after 5 years continuous service subject to performance requirements ²
ILO	Yes	• Staff convert after 5 years continuous service subject to performance requirements and continuing post availability ³

[1] ICSC, *Conditions of service applicable to both categories of staff: contractual arrangements: review of the implementation of the 3 types of contracts* (ICSC/83/R.4), 2016. [2] FAO, *Staff Regulations (Manual Section 301) – FC 95th Session*, 2000. [3] ILOAT, *Judgment No. 1481 (In re Annabi)*, 1996. [4] JIU, *Managing Performance and Contracts, Part III* (JIU/REP/2004/8), 2004. [5] Dalberg analysis, Consultations with external stakeholders, 2025. [6] IOM, *Staffing principles of IOM*, Accessed 19/12/2025

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- **Complement to on-going people initiatives**
 - Fixed-term contracts used as the long-term contract modality
 - **Greater voluntary staff mobility**
 - Selective and strategic use of HQ-reporting posts located in DOs
- Pilot

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Annex



Promoting greater voluntary staff mobility through career pathways that reward geographic mobility can improve collaboration across levels to strengthen access to existing expertise within FAO

Overview

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Enabling implementation

SITUATION AND CHALLENGE

- **Limited cross-level experience weakens “One FAO” collaboration.** Many staff have spent most of their careers at a single level (HQ, RO/SRO or CO), which constrains staff networks and narrows understanding of constraints and realities across levels, introducing tensions when trying to conduct collaborative, multidisciplinary work.
- **Mobility options exist but are under-used and not strategically rewarded.** Staff can move through lateral transfers or temporary assignments, but these are often ad-hoc, depend on individual networks, and are not incentivized through links to career development. Only 3% of staff (less than 1% of all human resources) change duty station each year¹, and mobility is not seen as a core part of an FAO career.

RECOMMENDATION

- **Incentivize voluntary mobility by linking it to career development** through greater geographic experience requirements for senior roles:
 - **Make experience in decentralized offices (or equivalent field experience for external hires) an eligibility requirement for senior technical and leadership roles (e.g., P5 onwards),** so mobility becomes an expected step on FAO career paths.
- **Increase the offer and uptake of existing mobility opportunities through a structured annual program for lateral transfers for P2/P3 staff,** including processes to:
 - **Identify staff interested in voluntary mobility:** Publish a call for expressions of interest from P2/P3 staff, that allow them to indicate what kinds of roles and geographies they would be interested in moving to
 - **Actively considering lateral transfers as part of the vacancy process:** Review anticipated vacancies (or vacant posts) in divisional and office-level calibration / talent discussions to identify positions that could be filled through lateral transfer
 - **Offer lateral transfer opportunities to interested staff:** Match staff that expressed interest to anticipated vacancies identified and offer lateral transfers to relevant staff, maintaining fully voluntary nature of mobility, while making it easy for staff to take up opportunities that will help in applications to more senior roles.

VISION OF SUCCESS

- **A “One FAO” career path.** Staff understand how cross-level experience contributes to progression and see predictable pathways that combine lateral moves and advancement.
- **Technical expertise circulates across levels and regions.** Strong performers move through different duty stations, building rich practical experience and sharing it across units.

[1] JIU report (2023)

FAO should introduce stronger decentralized office experience requirements for senior technical and leadership roles, and adopt a structured lateral-transfer cycle to promote the use of lateral transfers to fill vacancies

Key elements of incentivizing voluntary mobility

Component	Description
Make decentralized or equivalent geographic experience a standard requirement for senior roles	- Set clear experience expectations for selected senior technical and leadership roles (e.g. P5 and above), of at least 1–2 years in a decentralized duty station (RO/SRO/CO) or demonstrably equivalent geographic experience. - Integrate these requirements into job descriptions, vacancy announcements and talent reviews, with clear rationale for any exceptions (e.g., rare highly specialized posts).
Implement an annual program for systematic promotion of lateral transfers to fill anticipated vacancies	- Design a light annual program that systematically identifies and matches lateral transfer opportunities with interested P2/P3 staff, including: Request managers to propose posts: Managers review anticipated vacancies (or vacant posts) in succession planning discussions to identify anticipated vacancies that do not require specific expertise external to FAO and could suitably be filled through lateral transfer Call for expressions of interest: Publish a call for P2/P3 staff to indicate their interest in being considered for a lateral transfer, providing opportunity for them to indicate preferred types of roles and geographies. Matching facilitated by HR: HR conduct a matching exercise to identify suitable posts for staff that expressed interest, using transparent criteria Extension of lateral transfer offers: Hiring managers select a staff member from those matched by HR or chose to proceed with a regular recruitment procedure. Approval is sought from the staff member and from heads of the releasing and receiving departments or offices - Define simple principles for lateral transfers (e.g. minimum time in post before/after a move) to reduce uncertainty for staff and managers. - Define criteria for matching of staff to expected vacancies (e.g., consultation of PEMS reviews, matching geographic preferences, matching competencies in job descriptions), leaving hiring managers for the anticipated vacancies with the final decision on: - Selecting the right staff member between equally suitable options - Whether to offer a lateral transfer or proceed with an external hiring process

Lateral transfer chains:

- If a post is filled through lateral transfer the now vacant post of origin can again be identified as suitable for a lateral transfer at the discretion of the new hiring manager.
- This can result in chains of lateral transfers that produce further voluntary mobility
- A lateral transfer chain concludes if:
 - i. a hiring manager does not identify a vacancy for lateral transfers, in which case applications are welcome from internal candidates are welcome through the regular recruitment process.
 - ii. no suitable and interested staff of the correct grade is matched to the role.

For voluntary mobility incentives to succeed, FAO must build staff trust in mobility as a positive career choice and manager capacity to request lateral transfers, while ensuring flexibility in response to feedback

Enabling conditions for success	Critical enablers required
1. Staff trust that mobility supports, rather than derails, their careers	• Communicate how senior-role experience requirements and the P2/P3 lateral transfer program are related in plain language, demonstrating how lateral transfers help build experience needed to succeed in selection processes for senior roles, and providing concrete examples of illustrative career paths • Update career guidance materials and HR intranet pages to show typical “mobility-enhanced” pathways by job family and grade, highlighting how decentralized experience contributes to competitiveness for P4+ roles. • Encourage managers to integrate mobility into PEMS discussions, clarifying when cross-level experience will strengthen prospects in selection procedures for posts in the next grade and how staff can express mobility preferences.
2. HR and managers have the tools and capacity to implement the mobility program	• Update vacancy templates, talent-review tools and selection-panel guidance so that cross-level and cross-regional experience is systematically captured and weighed when assessing candidates, especially for senior and coordination roles. • Develop simple tools for the annual lateral transfer cycle (incl. standard forms for managers to flag anticipated vacancies to consider and staff to submit EOIs, matching guidelines, checklists for handover and onboarding). • Provide short orientation sessions for managers and HR focal points on planning for mobility in workforce plans, identifying suitable posts, and supporting staff through moves (e.g. relocation logistics, team integration).
3. Mobility program outcomes are tracked and used to refine the program	• Assign responsibility for monitoring key indicators such as: proportion of staff with decentralized experience by grade; number and pattern of lateral transfers per biennium; flows by region, duty-station type and gender. • Collect feedback from staff and managers after lateral transfers (brief surveys or debriefs) to understand barriers, enablers and perceived career impacts. • Use data and feedback to adjust eligibility criteria, communication, and the design/timing of the annual program, ensuring mobility pathways remain fair, feasible and aligned with FAO’s strategic and workforce needs.

Benchmark: Comparable UN Agencies with voluntary mobility policies have more active mechanisms to consider lateral transfer opportunities and have higher rates of mobility among professional staff

		FAO	WHO	ILO
		~1% ⁶ of staff move duty station/ year	8.9% ² of professional and higher (P & D) staff move duty station/ year	~6.5% ⁴ of regular professional and higher (P & D) staff move duty station/ year
Mobility policy details	Eligibility	All staff are eligible for transfers to positions at their same grade, subjects to approval by the heads of the releasing and receiving divisions or offices⁷	- Staff across levels from P2 to D1 are eligible to apply to roles in their grade or 1 grade above³ <i>[Planned] Mandatory for all international staff holding fixed term or continuing appointments under full global Geographical Mobility Programme¹</i>	- All staff are eligible, so long as they⁵: - work in a position classified at the same grade as the vacancy - serve in a duty station other than that where the vacancy is located - have completed their current post's standard assignment length - meet the minimum requirements stipulated in the vacancy notice
	Frequency	No limit on frequency of transfers⁷	- No limit on frequency of transfers³ <i>[Planned] Mandatory after 5 years in HQ posts, 2 in hardship posts, or 3 in any other posts¹</i>	Transfers only upon completion of the standard assignment length (e.g., length of fixed term contract)⁵
	Mechanism	- According to policy, transfer may result from a decision of a superior authority (Appointment by the DG), a staffing process, redeployment or selection process, with staff member approval⁷ - In practice, divisions and offices with vacancies propose to fill them by lateral transfer on an ad-hoc basis⁸	- Staff can apply on a voluntary basis for lateral transfer, indicating interest in up to 5 positions from a list of currently vacant posts, of which max. 2 can be at a higher grade³ - Applications are reviewed by HR, and transfer offers are made to staff, who can refuse and remain in their current role³ <i>[Planned] Staff must indicate preference among positions available and can be terminated with three months notice if they refuse "three reasonable offers" for reassignment¹</i>	Mobility is integrated in the standard procedure to fill vacancies⁵: - Staff interested in lateral transfers can apply to expected vacancies at their current grade - Relevant chiefs (analogous to directors at FAO) review internal applications to fill vacancies by lateral transfer - Recruitment, Assignment and Mobility Committee recommends which positions to fill by transfers and which to proceed to consider external applicants for

Sources: [1] Devex, [WHO postpones mandatory employee rotation after pushback from staff](#), 2023; [2] WHO, [Human resources: update](#), 2024; [3] WHO, [Human resources: annual report](#), 2024; [4] Average for 2023 and 2024, based on: ILO, [Composition and structure of the staff at 31 December 2024](#), [5] 2024; ILO, [Staff Regulations](#), 2025; [6] Average from 2018 to 2022, based on (i) # of geographic transfers from: JIU, [Review of management and administration in the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations](#) (JIU/REP/2023/5), 2023, and (ii) total staff in 2023 from: FAO, [Programme, budget, and HR dashboard](#), Accessed 19/12/2025. [7] FAO intranet page on Transferring Staff and Duty Station (2025) and FAO intranet page on Transferring Staff within Duty Station (2025). [8] Dalberg analysis, Consultations with FAO staff, 2025. Note – Comparable of statistics for FAO regarding only professional and higher (P & D) staff pending review by HR team.

General guidance on staff transfers:^{1,2}

- Staff members are subject to the authority of the Director-General, who may assign them to any activities or offices to whom they are responsible in the exercise of their functions.
- Staff members may be transferred when their services are required in another position in the same or in a different locality, and the duties of the new position are comparable with those currently performed, or the Director-General considers that the staff member concerned is qualified for the new position.
- When deciding about the transfer of a staff member to another position or duty station, **the following elements are taken into consideration:**
 - The requirements of the work programme and the interests of the division/office and
 - The qualifications, suitability, health, personal situation, and interests of the staff member concerned.

Guidance for lateral transfers with a change in duty station¹:

- The receiving division needs to request the releasing division to grant access to the staff member's data. **The transfer of a staff member may emanate from a decision of a superior authority, a staffing process, redeployment or a result of a selection process.**
- In all the cases above except for the selection process, **the staff member's acceptance of the transfer must be sought.** The heads of the releasing and receiving departments or offices must both request approval from the Director, CSH.

Guidance for lateral transfers within the same duty station²:

- Staff members may be transferred when their services are required in another position. **The transfer of a staff member may emanate from a managerial decision, a redeployment or following a competitive selection process.**
- When a request for a lateral transfer, outside of a competitive selection procedure, is recommended, **the heads of the releasing and receiving departments or offices must request approval from the Director, OHR.**
- **The Director of OHR will review the request to establish if the two positions** (current position encumbered by the staff member and position identified for transfer) **are technically analogous and if the vacancy announcement procedure can therefore be waived**

[1] FAO intranet page on Transferring Staff and Duty Station (2025), [2] FAO intranet page on Transferring Staff within Duty Station (2025)

Executive Summary

1. Recommendations Overview

2. Recommendations Details

- Must-have
- **Complement to on-going people initiatives**
 - Fixed-term contracts used as the long-term contract modality
 - Greater voluntary staff mobility
- **Selective and strategic use of HQ-reporting posts located in DOs**
- Pilot

3. Communications Approach

4. MEL Approach

Annex



Geographically locating HQ-reporting posts in decentralized offices can facilitate collaboration among technical experts and improve coherence of work within technical areas across levels

SITUATION AND CHALLENGE

- **For many technical areas, expertise is heavily Rome-based, making it challenging to drive cross-level leadership and coordination.** Multidisciplinary work across HQ, ROs and COs often runs in parallel rather than being jointly steered, making it harder to act as “One FAO” and align around shared strategic outcomes.
- **Low staff mobility reinforces structural divides between HQ and decentralized offices.** Despite existing mechanisms (lateral transfers, short-term assignments), only around 3% of staff – under 1% of all human resources – change duty station each year, so relatively few staff build lived experience across multiple duty stations and levels.
- **Resulting disconnect between HQ and decentralized offices can undermine coherence and collaboration.** Staff cited that some technical work led from Rome can be perceived as distant from country realities; on the other hand, staff also cited that decentralized office technical work may not fully reflect the latest global normative guidance. This leads to inconsistent narratives and missed opportunities for collaboration.

RECOMMENDATION

- **Enable and encourage Technical Division Directors to selectively, strategically geographically locate some HQ-reporting posts in decentralized offices.**
 - These staff members would still work on the global portfolio and be part of the HQ team but have closer working relations with DO teams through geographical proximity.

VISION OF SUCCESS

- **A “virtual HQ” technical network** in which HQ divisions have staff embedded in regions who coordinate work across levels and establish a closer link between decentralized offices and HQ divisions, facilitating better knowledge and resource sharing.
- **A more integrated One FAO culture**, where technical staff see themselves as part of a single global cadre, move more easily between levels over their careers, and help ensure expertise is accessible when and where it is most needed.
- **Strengthened access to available expertise across levels**, through geographic colocation, facilitating closer, day-to-day exchange between HQ divisions and decentralized offices.

FAO should define clear principles, roles and processes for setting up HQ-reporting posts in decentralized offices, and align recruitment and workforce planning processes to facilitate implementation

Component	Description
Define scope and principles for setting up HQ-reporting posts with duty stations in ROs/COs	• Articulate clear principles for when HQ-reporting posts would be better located in decentralized offices (DO), for example: • Roles where a significant proportion of time is dedicated to providing technical backstopping to projects in specific regions or countries • Offices with high demand for better access to HQ expertise and normative outputs in specific technical areas • Clarify that these posts have a global focus and are HQ-reporting and funded with Technical Division Directors retaining line management authority and accountability for their portfolios.
Define roles, responsibilities of staff in HQ-reporting posts with duty stations in ROs/Cos	• Specify core expectations for HQ-reporting roles located in decentralized offices, such as: • Contributing fully to global normative workstreams (guidance, standards, strategies, flagship publications) as members of the global team • Acting as connectors and coordinators for their theme across regions, helping align HQ guidance, regional priorities and country-level implementation, and reducing duplication or conflicting advice. • Bringing structured feedback and evidence from DOs into HQ processes, ensuring that emerging issues and innovations from countries shape global products and positions
Align recruitment, workforce planning and HR processes with geographic distribution choices	• Use workforce-planning discussions between HQ Divisions and Regional Offices to identify roles that could be geographically located in decentralized offices, starting with upcoming vacancies rather than creating new posts. • Include geographic location considerations in vacancy planning for relevant HQ roles, explicitly deciding whether each post should be Rome-based or located in a specific decentralized duty station. • Ensure HR and finance processes can accommodate HQ-reporting posts with duty stations in ROs/COs, including clear duty-station designations, entitlements, and expectations for participation in HQ routines (e.g. virtual meetings, periodic missions to Rome).
Engage HQ-reporting staff in RO/COs into cross-level collaboration mechanisms	• Ensure HQ posts in decentralized offices are embedded in existing technical networks and working groups, participating in global/thematic coordination (e.g. working groups, communities of practice) and acting as bridges to DO colleagues.

HQ-reporting posts in decentralized offices can add value if leaders across levels are aligned on their value, staff understand the implications, and HR/budget processes support the model

Enabling conditions for success	Critical enablers required
1. Senior leaders share a clear narrative on the purpose and limits of HQ-reporting posts with duty stations in ROs/COs	- Effectively communicate geographic location options to Technical Division and Regional Directors, emphasizing that: - They are a strategic lever, not a quota – an option Directors can use selectively where locating an HQ post in a decentralized office will improve technical delivery - Staff in these roles are not “shadow managers” of RO/CO teams, but technical connectors whose role is to strengthen coherence, knowledge flow, and access to expertise without changing existing management lines - HQ-reporting posts with duty stations in decentralized offices are not to be used to relocate low performing staff, but are intended for staff (i) whose work would benefit from proximity to a specific geography, (ii) whose technical expertise is especially demanded in a particular geography, and (iii) who have demonstrated a strong ability to work independently whilst staying connected to multiple teams
2. Staff understand the purpose and implications of HQ-reporting posts with duty stations in ROs/COs	- Communicate clearly to HQ and DO staff that these roles remain HQ-reporting with global responsibilities, while benefitting from proximity to regional/country partners - Explain how these roles differ from existing RO/CO technical positions, emphasizing complementarity and collaboration, not competition or parallel authority - Present HQ-reporting posts with duty stations in DOs as attractive career opportunities, especially for staff who wish to combine global normative work with closer engagement in country realities, clarifying that such experience is valued in future applications to more senior roles (see recommendation on Mobility).
3. Managers empowered to set up and benefit from HQ-reporting posts with duty stations in ROs/COs	- Provide simple guidance and templates for managers proposing to set-up a HQ-reporting post in a DO, covering justification (technical rationale, cost, connectivity), reporting arrangements, and coordination with existing RO/CO structures; this should be done sufficiently in advance of biennium planning for Division Directors to review this option in advance of the next biennium - HR to offer consultations with managers on how to best design, supervise and integrate HQ-reporting posts based in decentralized offices (e.g., clarifying roles vis-à-vis existing RO/CO staff, managing remote collaboration and performance, and using these posts strategically to strengthen cross-level coordination).

Case Study: HQ-reporting posts in decentralized offices in other UN agencies



In 2025, WHO proposed strategic relocations of selected HQ technical functions to strengthen programme delivery by placing expertise closer to operational settings, areas of need, and key partners.

WHO announced its plans for 2026–2027 to relocate 81 positions across four decentralized offices to reduce fragmentation and improve the quality and responsiveness of technical work by embedding teams in partner-rich ecosystems:

- **Berlin (*Surveillance Systems and Public Health Laboratory Systems units*)**: relocates surveillance and lab-strengthening expertise to co-locate with the WHO Hub for Pandemic and Epidemic Intelligence in Berlin, improving coordination and speeding the translation of laboratory and surveillance data into actionable intelligence
- **Jamnagar (functions within the *Traditional, Complementary and Integrative Medicine unit*)**: co-locates the traditional medicine functions within the unit with the existing Global Centre for Traditional Medicine in Jamnagar, support WHO's ambition to reinforce its global leadership in traditional medicine by fostering greater coherence between normative work, technical capacity, and operational delivery.
- **Lyon (*Nursing Office and Health Workforce teams*)**: co-locates the Health Workforce and Nursing teams with the WHO Academy, with the aim of strengthening the Academy's role as a responsive, unified, and globally recognized hub for health workforce development.
- **Dubai (Functions within the *Operations Support & Logistics unit*)**: positions WHO's logistics coordination at a major global humanitarian logistics hub (air/sea connectivity and an established humanitarian ecosystem), enabling faster deployments and more continuous joint planning with key operational partners

Cost savings are an additional benefit: Alongside the intended programmatic gains, the relocation of all 81 positions is estimated to generate ~\$4m in annual run-rate savings primarily through post cost differentials



In 2025, UNICEF started the HQ Efficiencies Initiative, aiming to reshape its headquarters footprint :

- Establishing new global offices (including Nairobi and Istanbul) and expanding several existing hubs, is intended to increase synergies across HQ/Regional/Country Offices and National Committees and place HQ capacity in time zones nearer to more than 90% of UNICEF regional and country teams
- Technical support being closer to field realities is expected to enable faster, more context-specific programming and stronger day-to-day connection with country teams and partners

Cost savings are an additional benefit: UNICEF estimates that by end-2026 it will have outposted 948 HQ staff, resulting in ~\$54.5m in annual savings.

Executive Summary

1. Recommendations Overview

2. Recommendations Details

- Must-have
- Complement to on-going people initiatives
- Pilot
 - Dual reporting line pilot between HQ technical divisions and senior technical staff in DOs
 - Thematic working group pilot
 - PSU-led pilot to work with select technical units to strategically leverage external expertise

3. Communications Approach

4. MEL Approach

Annex



To better align technical work across levels and increase access to technical expertise across the house, FAO should pilot dual reporting lines between HQ technical divisions and decentralized technical staff

SITUATION AND CHALLENGE

- **Decentralized technical work is weakly connected to HQ divisions.** Misalignment between the decentralized structure, HQ divisions and cross-cutting global strategy creates challenges for coordination and reporting, because work of technical staff in decentralized offices is not systematically integrated with relevant technical divisions. This weakens strategic coordination across levels and leads to duplication of expertise and efforts.
- **Collaborative, multidisciplinary work across HQ, regional, and country offices lacks a clear organizing backbone,** with no single point of accountability for convening the right expertise or ensuring alignment around shared technical priorities—resulting in inconsistent leadership and coordination.
- **Roles and responsibilities for cross-level coordination are ambiguous.** Unclear expectations on who leads on technical direction, quality assurance and knowledge flows between HQ and decentralized offices contribute to duplication, reduce the quality and coherence of outputs, and prevent FAO from fully leveraging its collective technical capacity.

RECOMMENDATION

Near term: Pilot secondary HQ supervisors for senior technical staff (P4 and up) in decentralized offices (including regional, sub-regional, and country offices) to a parent technical division in HQ

- Pilot with only 2-3 technical areas (e.g., NFI, NFO) and review results
- If successful, scale to all technical DO staff over P4

Longer term: Consider moving to a full matrix structure, whereby all decentralized office staff have two reporting lines: One geographically bound, and one to a technical HQ division at the DO level

VISION OF SUCCESS

- **HQ and decentralized offices operate as one technical system.** Priorities, planning and technical narratives are coordinated across HQ, regional and country levels, with transparent communication and aligned incentives so staff can seamlessly contribute to global, regional and country objectives.
- **Technical quality and consistency improve.** Expertise is coordinated across levels, performance is jointly managed by geographic and technical supervisors, and decision-making is informed both by the latest global standards and by local realities—reducing contradictory advice and duplication of work.
- **Resources and knowledge flow more efficiently across FAO.** Dual reporting supports faster mobilization of the right skills, stronger cross-regional collaboration, and greater collective impact on delivering FAO's Strategic Framework outcomes.

FAO should design the dual reporting pilot so B-line supervisors in relevant HQ units add clear technical value, with well-defined A/B roles and shared responsibility for goal setting and performance management

Key features of a dual reporting / matrix structure, for further consideration by organizational design teams

Component		Description
Pilot Phase	Identify clearly defined pilot technical areas and manage scope on an ongoing basis	• Select a small number of well-bounded technical areas (e.g., Forestry, Fisheries, one cross-cutting theme) and a clear cohort (e.g., P4–P5 technical officers) for the initial pilot. • Review pilot progress regularly with participating divisions and offices to adjust scope and design on an ongoing basis
	Assign senior technical staff in pilot technical areas B-line supervisors in relevant HQ divisions	• Pilot dual reporting by assigning senior technical staff (P4 and above) in decentralized offices a B-line supervisor in the relevant HQ technical division for their area of work (e.g., Forestry, Fisheries, Nutrition) for selected pilot technical areas. • Prioritize B-line supervisors who can actively engage in work planning and technical review, so they can join the dots between technical work in decentralized offices and the thematic work led from HQ.
	Clearly distinguish roles of A-line and B-line supervisors in goal setting & performance management	• Define a simple, written split of responsibilities that reflects delegation of authority across HQ, regional/subregional and country levels, for example: • A-line (geographic) supervisor: has authority over performance evaluation, objective setting, and work planning, and is accountable for overall delivery, local stakeholder relations, and resource and team management. • B-line (technical) supervisor: Feeds into performance evaluation, objective setting, and work planning, and is responsible for technical direction and quality assurance, alignment with divisional strategies and global norms, and connecting staff to thematic networks and working groups. • Establish protocols for collaboration between A- and B-line supervisors (e.g., brief quarterly check-ins, joint agreement on 1–2 shared technical objectives) and an escalation path to regional representatives/division directors to prevent and resolve conflicts. • Emphasize that dual reporting should reinforce regional coordination functions, not bypass them—B-line supervisors work in partnership with regional and subregional leadership rather than directly re-tasking country teams.
	Account for dual supervision in performance management	• Require both A- and B-line supervisors to contribute to PEMS for decentralized technical staff in scope, with A-line supervisors owning the overall rating, while B-line supervisors providing structured technical input (e.g., technical quality, collaboration, contribution to divisional priorities). • Use dual inputs to enhance career development: B-line supervisors help ensure decentralized technical staff stay at the forefront of their field (e.g., proposing learning opportunities, thematic assignments, participation in global initiatives). • Combine dual reporting with mobility discussions so strong performers in decentralized offices are visible to HQ and considered for secondment and lateral transfer opportunities.

If the pilot proves effective, FAO should progressively extend dual reporting to other decentralized technical roles using a transparent matching framework and realistic spans of control

Key features of a dual reporting / matrix structure, for further consideration by organizational design teams

Component	Description
Pilot Phase	Evaluate pilot outcomes - Identify specific learning questions for the pilot (e.g., impact on duplication, technical coherence, collaboration patterns) and agree simple indicators and feedback tools (short surveys, qualitative case examples). - Conduct a light but structured evaluation of the pilot within an agreed timeframe, led by OSP (e.g., staff and supervisor feedback, simple indicators on duplication, technical coherence, workload and spans of control)
Roll-out Phase	Adjust dual reporting model based on evaluation of pilot outcomes - Use pilot findings to refine the model design – for example, clarifying A/B supervisor roles, fine-tuning spans of control, and identifying which types of technical roles benefit most from dual reporting (and which should remain single-line) - Prepare a concise options note for senior management setting out lessons learned, recommended design adjustments, and clear criteria for deciding whether, where and how to proceed with a wider roll-out
	Establish a clear and transparent framework for identifying B-reporting lines - Map decentralized technical posts against HQ technical divisions and job families to determine which roles would benefit most from dual reporting. - For clear sectoral roles (e.g., fisheries officer), assign B-line supervisors within the relevant division; for more cross-cutting roles (e.g., economics/statistics), agree on principles (primary technical focus, main portfolio, existing collaboration patterns) to decide between options. - Communicate that dual reporting lines will be established only where they add value to technical alignment and collaboration; some decentralized technical roles may remain single-line if a clear B-line counterpart cannot be identified or if the added complexity outweighs benefits.
	Roll out dual reporting to applicable decentralized technical staff while managing spans of control - Based on pilot results, progressively extend dual reporting to other technical areas and later to decentralized technical staff below P4, while continuing to prioritize roles where technical alignment across levels is most critical. - Define indicative spans of control for B-line supervisors (e.g., maximum number of decentralized staff they can meaningfully support), and periodically review the number and distribution of staff and non-staff human resources reporting to each HQ technical lead and each decentralized office supervisor. - Adjust reporting assignments when workloads or team sizes create bottlenecks, overload supervisors, or weaken the quality of technical oversight, so dual reporting remains manageable and impactful.

Wider matrix roll-out may only be feasible in the longer term:

- Dual reporting must be considered carefully to ensure it strengthens FAO's multidisciplinary approach currently instilled through the PPAs
- Insights from the pilot should inform future organizational design discussions, so that a shift towards a full matrix model can potentially be revisited under future strategic frameworks

Overview

Recommendation details

Enabling implementation

FAO should embed dual reporting within wider reforms and the Strategic Framework, with clear communication so staff see it as support for collaboration and coherence rather than added bureaucracy

Enabling conditions for success	Critical enablers required
1. Staff understand the objectives of dual reporting and are willing to engage	- Communicate clearly to staff in scope that dual reporting is intended to support their work and development, not add bureaucracy, emphasizing that it will mainly change how objectives are set, aligned and reviewed, rather than adding new reporting products. - Involve staff and existing supervisors in identifying suitable B-line supervisors, for example by: - Asking staff which HQ counterparts they already collaborate with - Gathering input on the type of technical support they most need from HQ - Provide short orientation sessions for staff, A-line and B-line supervisors on how to work together effectively, including expectations for communication and joint planning.
2. Pilot areas are clearly defined and manageable	- Select a small number of well-bounded technical areas (e.g., Forestry, Fisheries, one cross-cutting theme) and a clear cohort (e.g., P4–P5 technical officers) for the initial pilot. - Document specific learning questions for the pilot (e.g., impact on duplication, technical coherence, collaboration patterns) and agree simple indicators and feedback tools (short surveys, qualitative case examples). - Review pilot progress regularly with participating HQ divisions and decentralized offices and adapt scope or design before considering wider roll-out.
3. On-going organizational reforms at the regional and country office level are leveraged to maintain manageable pans of control	- Coordinate dual reporting implementation with ongoing regional and country office reforms to avoid many-to-one reporting situations that overburden key staff. - Before assigning B-line responsibilities, assess current supervisory loads and adjust where necessary (e.g., redistributing staff, limiting the number of B-line supervisees per HQ lead). - Periodically review spans of control and workloads as the pilot and subsequent roll-out progress and make adjustments to maintain realistic oversight capacity.
4. Dual reporting is aligned with the Strategic Framework and drives, rather than entrenches, silos	- As part of pilot design, map dual reporting relationships to Strategic Framework outcomes and program priority areas, ensuring that new reporting lines reinforce, rather than cut across, existing strategic leadership structures. - After the pilot period, conduct a light review of how dual reporting has affected contributions to Strategic Framework objectives (e.g., examples of improved cross-regional collaboration, fewer conflicting narratives, clearer ownership for results). - Use findings to refine supervisor selection and reporting line design—adjusting any arrangements that appear to entrench siloed ways of working, and prioritizing configurations that demonstrably improve coordination and technical coherence.

Case Study: Dual reporting at OHCHR



THE NEED

- Ensuring that staff deployed in highly decentralized, politically sensitive, or cross-mandate environments maintain technical independence and quality while remaining operationally integrated into country teams, peace missions, or UN coordination structures.

KEY ELEMENTS OF DUAL REPORTING

- **Dual reporting is typically applied to ensure technical oversight and operational supervision**
 - Dual reporting is applied when substantive oversight and administrative supervision needs to come from different parts of the organization
 - Substantive reporting line: Usually to a technical division at HQ (e.g., legal standards, human rights analysis, strategic direction, quality assurance)
 - Administrative reporting line: Usually to the head of the country office or field presence (e.g., daily supervision, security, logistics, performance input)
- **Dual reporting is (selectively) applied across Country Offices, Human Rights Advisors, and Peace Missions**
 - Country Offices: Staff provide substantive reports to technical divisions in HQ and administrative reports to the Head of Office (e.g., an IT officer reports substantively to HQ IT and administratively to the CO)
 - Human Rights Advisors (HRAs): Substantively report to the field office & Technical Cooperation Division at OHCHR; Administratively report to the UN Resident Coordinator
 - Peace Missions: Human rights components often co-managed by DPO/DPPA and OHCHR. Staff report substantively to OHCHR HQ (e.g., on legal standards, methodology) and administratively to the Head of Mission

IMPACT ON TECHNICAL CAPACITY

- Enables **operational integration in complex field environments**, improving coordination with UNCTs, peace missions, and local partners
- **Reduces risk of political pressure influencing analytical outputs** by maintaining HQ-anchored substantive oversight
- Provides **clearer division of roles** with HQ setting technical direction; field leadership ensures staff safety, daily management, and operational relevance

TRANSFERABLE INSIGHTS

- Dual reporting helps ensure technical credibility and independence (via HQ oversight) while enabling operational integration with country teams, peace missions, and field contexts

Executive Summary

1. Recommendations Overview

2. Recommendations Details

- Must-have
- Complement to on-going people initiatives
- **Pilot**
 - Dual reporting line pilot between HQ technical divisions and senior technical staff in DOs
 - **Thematic working group pilot**
 - PSU-led pilot to work with select technical units to strategically leverage external expertise

3. Communications Approach

4. MEL Approach

Annex



To strengthen coordination of multidisciplinary and cross-level work, FAO should pilot working groups on priority thematic areas

SITUATION AND CHALLENGE

- Collaborative, multidisciplinary work on specific technical areas that cut across HQ, regional and country offices can often lack **strong leadership for coordination**, with no one accountable for convening the right expertise and ensuring efforts align around shared problems.
- **Joint initiatives and multidisciplinary workstreams are rarely planned from a whole-of-FAO perspective**, meaning teams design and deliver activities in isolation and country demands are met through fragmented efforts rather than coherent “One FAO” responses.
- **Roles and responsibilities for coordinating collaborative work across divisions and levels are unclear**, creating uncertainty that results in missed opportunities to collaborate, duplicated work and lower-quality outputs that do not fully leverage FAO’s collective expertise.
- **Existing structures for coordination** (e.g., PPA related meetings, technical expert networks) **are often perceived as too broad** to facilitate grass-roots coordination among technical staff

RECOMMENDATION

- **Pilot thematic working groups (WGs) for a small number of priority technical areas that require greater sustained collaboration across HQ, regional/sub-regional offices and country offices.**
 - WGs focus on topics staff are already working on, where there is a benefit for them to do so in a more connected manner and be informed of others similar work in the area
 - WGs provide clear leadership for coordination, through a designated lead coordinator responsible for convening and maintaining WG momentum.
 - WGs are open to all staff, based on voluntary participation, meet regularly and use shared digital workspaces to coordinate activities and capture outputs.
 - Each WG supports coordination of work planning across its members, to ensure opportunities for collaboration are leveraged to promote FAO’s strategic objectives within a thematic area
 - WG do not have a dedicated central budget but leverage existing unit resources where relevant.

VISION OF SUCCESS

- **Stronger internal and external coherence on key thematic areas**, with working groups shaping common technical positions and shared narratives so FAO speaks and acts as “One FAO” from global fora through to country implementation.
- **Higher-quality and more timely technical support and outputs**, consistently drawing on dispersed expertise across units and levels, reducing duplication of effort and ensuring that the best-placed experts are mobilized when and where they are needed
- **A replicable structure for cross-divisional coordination on selected themes**, with clear mandates and shared workplans.

Effective working groups should meet regularly, identify a coordination team, translate strategic objectives into joint workplans, and manage thematic activities, Communities of Practice, and partnerships

Key elements of working groups

Component	Description
Identifies clear and engaged leadership	- Identify a senior technical officer based in an HQ division, who works extensively on the thematic topic, as working group leader (lead coordinator) - Establish a small coordination team of 5-10 strongly engaged members who are already central to work on the thematic area
Translates strategic objectives into concrete and coordinated workplans	- Use WG meetings to co-create shared workplans that align existing individual workplans to better drive FAO’s strategic objectives for the thematic area , which may involve: - Identifying and planning how to support each other for near- and medium-term priorities and external milestones (e.g. COPs, major global reports, flagship initiatives, key Governing Body discussions) where coordinated action across levels and divisions is most valuable - Identifying opportunities for joint activities (e.g., shared webinars, joint technical products) that replace multiple smaller, fragmented efforts
Establishes processes, systems, and tools for effective ways of working	- Use regular WG meeting (e.g., monthly or bi-weekly virtual meetings) as spaces for peer support and problem-solving (e.g., troubleshooting country requests, harmonizing technical positions), as well as to align upcoming activities - Use shared folders and SharePoint pages for agendas, notes, workplans and key documents so collaboration builds on existing work, avoiding duplication - Encourage working groups to designate active members as focal points in relevant HQ divisions and decentralized offices to channel updates, issues and good practices into the WG
Manages thematic activities and knowledge sharing mechanisms	- Maintain a consolidated calendar of thematic activities (workshops, webinars, missions, product development) across divisions and levels to avoid overlap - Encourage members to bring planned activities to the WG early, so design and delivery can benefit from peers’ feedback and expertise - Document and share lessons learned and reusable materials (e.g., slide decks, concept notes) to reduce re-work for future activities. - Consider managing a wider Community of Practice (CoP) related to the theme to align discussion topics and events with the WG’s workplan and upcoming thematic priorities, channel questions and knowledge needs from CoPs to the right experts across divisions and levels, and capture key CoP outputs (summaries, FAQs, guidance notes) in the WG’s shared workspace for wider reuse
Coordinates thematic partnerships	- Develop an overview of existing external partners and networks working on the theme (e.g., reference centres, expert groups, UN or academic partners) - Agree how partners can contribute to WG priorities (e.g., reviewing draft guidance, speaking in webinars, co-developing tools) and who leads each relationship - Use the WGs to coordinate requests to key thematic partners, so external experts receive fewer, better-structured requests rather than fragmented outreach from multiple units

To deliver tangible benefits for staff, FAO should pilot Working Groups in specific thematic areas, mobilize key thematic leaders for coordination, and communicate clearly how WGs support existing work (1/2)

Enabling conditions for success	Critical enablers required
1. Pilots are used to test, refine and position WGs	• Define 2–3 pilot WGs with clear learning objectives (e.g., what coordination gaps they address, how they improve access to expertise, what value they add beyond existing structures) • Designate a small corporate support role (e.g., OSP to work with relevant divisions) to accompany pilots, help troubleshoot, and capture lessons learned across themes • After an agreed period (e.g., 12–18 months), review pilot WGs against simple criteria (value added, participation, alignment with FAO strategic framework objectives) and decide whether to keep, adapt, scale to other areas, or close • Use lessons from pilots to issue concise corporate guidance on when and how to establish WGs, including guideline that they should only be created where they are clearly useful and additive
2. WGs are for well-defined thematic areas where staff across units are active and can benefit from coordination	• Identify potential technical areas of a cross-cutting nature, with insufficient collaboration across units, strong country demand, and a need for a coherent FAO voice • Map ongoing projects, initiatives and staff working on each candidate theme to confirm there is a critical mass (e.g., 40–80 staff) and visible duplication or fragmentation

Areas of technical expertise with greater need for coordination across levels (HQ, RO, CO) identified in phase 1 of the technical capacity assessment could serve as a starting point to explore and identify specific technical areas for pilot working groups. These include:

- **Nutrition:** In further discussions ESN identified in particular “**Nutritious Food Public Procurement**” as a strong candidate for a pilot working group
- **Urban agrifood systems:** Phase 1 identified scattered expertise with limited capacity to coordinate efforts between HQ units and across decentralized offices particularly for key urban agrifood transformation entry points (urban food markets, urban and peri-urban agriculture, public food procurement, urban forestry, and food loss and waste reduction)
- **Tenure rights:** Phase 1 identified limited capacity to coordinate work on small-scale producer’s tenure rights and access to resources. Staff cited limited capacity and mechanisms to share expertise and coordinate across disciplinary teams (e.g., land tenure, water access, access to forest resources, fishing rights), resulting in inconsistent consideration of physical, institutional, and social factors across units’ work

To deliver tangible benefits for staff, FAO should pilot Working Groups in specific thematic areas, mobilize key thematic leaders for coordination, and communicate clearly how WGs support existing work (2/2)

Enabling conditions for success	Critical enablers required
3. Coordination team and core membership are motivated and engaged	• Identify key staff working on the theme (e.g., frequently consulted experts, coordinators of existing activities) with sufficient capacity and invite them to form a light touch coordination team. • Clarify roles within the coordination team (e.g., convening meetings, setting agendas, maintaining the shared workspace, liaising with CoPs and partners). • Publicize the WG widely and invite any interested staff to join as members, making it clear they can engage flexibly by bringing their ongoing work and questions to the group.
4. Staff are aware of WGs as a practical tool to make their current work easier and more impactful	• Advertise WGs as spaces for peer support, problem-solving, and bottom-up coordination (e.g., troubleshooting country requests, harmonizing technical positions, finding ways to leverage each others work), so staff see direct relevance to their daily tasks and workplans • Develop a concise one-pager and intranet page for each working group, including examples of concrete early wins (e.g., joint webinar with larger reach due to collaboration across units) to demonstrate value • Encourage division and senior leaders to publicly recognize WG outputs (e.g., in town halls, emails, key guidance documents), giving groups visibility and signaling that WGs are a valued way of working

Case Study: AMR Working Group (WG)



THE NEED

- AMR is a cross-sectoral issue, and a strategic priority under BP3: One Health, requiring collaboration across disciplines
- Expertise on AMR existed in FAO across multiple units and divisions, but coordination was fragmented

KEY ELEMENTS OF AMR WORKING GROUP

- Multi-disciplinary AMR Working Group established in 2018 to strengthen technical collaboration and institutional coherence, leveraging the momentum from UNGA declaration of 2016

A structured coordination team and focal points across regions that strengthen technical collaboration and coherence on AMR

- The working group is governed by the Chief Veterinary Officer and a dedicated coordination team across key AMR areas. The WG assigned focal points to thematic units (11) and to decentralized offices – regional offices (6), sub-regional offices (5), and country offices (55) – assigning staff with technical profiles matching the needs of the unit or office
- Brings together staff and experts from Headquarters and decentralized offices across multiple technical units. Focal points' reporting lines are flexible, changing across regions

A collective, participatory process that builds shared ownership of the AMR strategic vision and priorities

- Strategic vision and short-, medium-, and long-term objectives were co-created through broad participation across HQ and decentralized offices, creating clear direction and stronger alignment of work across the AMR agenda.

A flexible participation model with regular engagement that drives alignment and joint delivery

- Participation is voluntary, with regular meetings (with about 30-40 attendees) and bi-monthly webinars to align technical positions, develop joint knowledge products, and coordinate contributions to the Quadripartite Joint Secretariat on AMR (FAO, WHO, WOAH, UNEP)
- Maintaining engagement will require additional motivation mechanisms (e.g., integration into PEMS)

Strong partner integration through reference centers and external CoPs that expand FAO's technical reach

- Set up the AMR reference center network – a partnership agreement which requires the reference centers to contribute a minimum of ten pro-bono working days in technical input
- Coordinates six external Communities of Practice (CoP), including RENOFARM CoP with 700 external experts, which is highly active

IMPACT ON TECHNICAL CAPACITY:

- Strengthened FAO's internal coherence on AMR across divisions and regions
- Addresses of technical needs across regions and units by identifying gaps and allocating staff with appropriate profiles as focal points

TRANSFERABLE INSIGHTS

- A cross-divisional working group model with clear leadership and voluntary participation can effectively unify dispersed expertise around complex thematic areas
- Partnerships with external centers and Communities of Practice offer a cost-effective mechanism for expanding access to specialized technical expertise

Executive Summary

1. Recommendations Overview

2. Recommendations Details

- Must-have
- Complement to on-going people initiatives
- Pilot
 - Dual reporting line pilot between HQ technical divisions and senior technical staff in DOs
 - Thematic working group pilot
 - PSU-led pilot to work with select technical units to strategically leverage external expertise

3. Communications Approach

4. MEL Approach

Annex



To systematically leverage external expertise, PSU should run a pilot with selected technical divisions to introduce a structured approach for filling cross-cutting technical gaps and strengthening FAO's capabilities

SITUATION AND CHALLENGE

- FAO has a strong network of partnerships across governments, research institutions, academia, and development partners
- In its latest strategy¹, FAO set the intention of moving towards more transformative partnerships, which focus on driving systemic, long-term, and disruptive action
- **Successfully leveraging partners and external expertise is a key component of FAO's technical capacity.** In a context of increasingly constrained donor resources, agrifood system actors must each contribute where they have the strongest comparative advantage. Through partnerships, FAO can drive systemic impact beyond what it can achieve independently and access specialized expertise and capabilities in areas where its own internal technical capacity is limited.
- **Whilst FAO has many modalities to bring in external expertise, these can be underutilized or used in fragmented, small-scale ways.** This results in:
 - Missed opportunities to access the full range of external expertise, including frontier knowledge, specialized skills, or local/context-specific insights from FAO's partners, which can improve FAO's normative and programmatic delivery
 - Variable sustained impact of partnerships, with unclear expectations and uneven knowledge transfer back into FAO systems
- **There is an opportunity for FAO to be more strategic in its approach to partnerships to contribute to areas of technical expertise**

RECOMMENDATION

To leverage expertise from external partners for catalytic impact, launch a PSU-led pilot to work with select technical units to launch new partnerships which close identified technical capacity gaps and sustainably strengthen FAO's capabilities. This will include:

- Synthesizing Phase 1 findings into common technical expertise needs that are relevant to multiple technical units, and which should be filled through external expertise (e.g., behavioral science, AI, bio-tech)
- Working proactively with relevant divisions and decentralized offices to define the need, identify potential external partners, and determine optimal modalities (e.g., secondments, reference centers, expert networks), and implement the partnerships across multiple organizational units
- Formalize and operationalize partnerships and capture learnings, to inform further roll-out for additional technical areas across the three levels (HQ-RO-CO)
- Use pilot to also identify opportunities for improve partnership processes

Leverage pilot learnings in other areas and embed a strategic approach across the house

VISION OF SUCCESS

Partnerships are aligned with FAO's strategic priorities and strategically leveraged to address technical capacity gaps

- FAO has a unified, organization-wide visibility of technical partnership's needs, enabling deliberate, coherent, and high-impact engagement with leading institutions
- External expertise complements internal capacity, ensuring FAO remains the global leader on agrifood systems knowledge and forward-looking trends
- HQ, regional, and country offices all benefit from global partnerships and a "One FAO" approach to partnerships, reducing duplication and strengthening consistency in partnership management.
- FAO staff are upskilled and benefit from direct access to frontier knowledge: through secondments, joint research, and partner-led training, staff enhance their technical capabilities
- Partnerships contribute to sustainable knowledge transfer and organizational learning

[1] FAO, [Strategic Framework 2022-2031](#), 2021;

Similar challenges around partnerships were also found in the Programme Evaluation Report 2025 by FAO Office of Evaluation

A successful strategic partnerships pilot will require FAO to be intentional about when and where to bring in external expertise, choosing approaches that support deep and sustainable engagement

Overview

Recommendation details

Enabling implementation

When to leverage external expertise rather than develop knowledge in-house?

FAO should consider when external expertise is appropriate to use to close technical capacity gaps, as identified in Phase 1 of the Technical Capacity Assessment. This is especially true when other organizations/ experts may have a **higher comparative advantage**, such as:

1. **Fast-evolving or frontier technical areas where FAO needs to keep close relationships with other actors in the space to understand the latest trends** (e.g., scientific research, latest industry innovations)
2. **Areas where external partners have a track record, legitimacy, or convening power that FAO cannot build quickly in-house**
3. **Expertise that is difficult for FAO to attract or retain due to labour-market competitiveness** (e.g., AI, biotech)
4. **Highly localized or context-specific expertise, which FAO will not require ongoing staff capacity in** (e.g., tied to a specific geography for a specific project)

Note: Leveraging external expertise should not be a substitute for FAO investing in and maintaining its own internal expertise, especially in core areas of work

What modalities should be used and when?

The most suitable modality will depend on the type of partner, and the nature of the engagement FAO seeks to achieve (see next slide)

The diagnostic exercise revealed a widespread lack of awareness among staff about the modalities they could be leveraging to engage individual external experts or partners, and that modalities were often used in an ad-hoc way.

In particular, staff highlighted secondments, reference centers, and partnership framework agreements as the modalities they most want to see scaled up to improve access to external expertise.

Secondments	Partners	Individual experts
• Secondments into FAO • Secondments outside FAO	• Reference centers • Partner framework agreements (underdevelopment) • Standby partnership network • Partners for specialized trainings • Implementing partners	• External communities of practice • External expert rosters • Knowledge hubs • UN volunteers • Internships, fellowships, volunteers (IFV)

How can we ensure a long-term, sustainable impact on technical capacity?

Partnerships must strengthen FAO's technical capacity in a lasting way, ensuring knowledge is retained and not lost at the end of the engagement. To enable this:

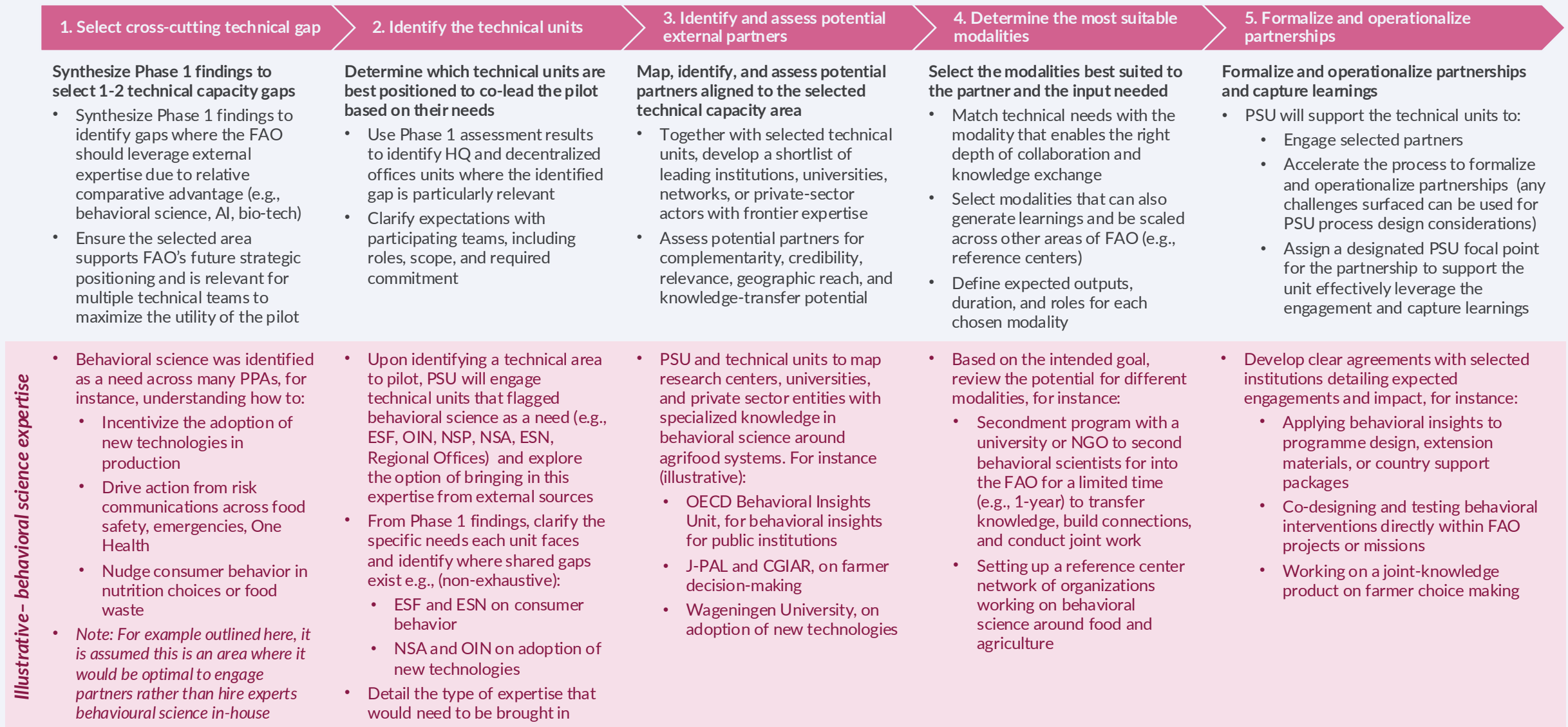
- **Plan for continuity from the outset.** Define early what happens after the partner's involvement ends, including clear handover plans, roles, and ownership
- **Integrate external expertise into FAO KM and systems**
 - Require all partnership deliverables to be embedded in FAO's existing platforms
 - Capture and codify knowledge into reusable formats (e.g., methods, templates)
 - Facilitate practical on-the-job transfer through coaching, and internal dissemination
 - Ensure pilot divisions and offices plan at least one knowledge-sharing or capacity-building activity for HQ/RO/CO staff
- **Institutionalize learning and scale successful partnerships**
 - Document what worked and what didn't (partnership model, modality choice, process)
 - Share insights across divisions to inform future partnerships
 - Replicate effective partnership models in other technical areas where similar gaps exist.

Deep dive: FAO has several available modalities to leverage external expertise from partner organizations and individual experts, depending on the nature of input required

Model		Description	Duration of input	Cost	Owner	
Secondments	Secondments into FAO	Temporary placement of staff from partner organizations into FAO technical units with technical capacity gaps, bringing in specialized expertise	Medium term	Paid by FAO or by original employer	Government Academia UN agencies Private sector UN agencies	HR HR HR/SCC HR HR/SCC
	Secondments outside FAO	Temporary placement of FAO staff into partner organizations, upskilling staff through exposure to new tools and methods and network building	Medium term	Paid by host employer	Academia or Government (considered outside of duty)	Ethics Office
Partners	Reference centres	Accredited institutions providing pro-bono technical inputs to FAO's normative and operational work	Short term	Pro-bono input	Technical divisions	
	Partnership framework agreement	Institutional partnership agreement with global technical partners that can facilitate them to be used as an implementing partner as needed across FAO (MoU, etc.)	Short term	No financial exchange between parties	PSU and PSS	
	Standby partnership network	Network of deployment organizations that second experts in humanitarian emergency settings for immediate short-term technical reinforcement to respond to emergencies	Short term	In-kind support	OER	
	Partners for specialized training	Collaboration with partners to design and deliver specialized training programmes for staff upskilling	Short term	Paid by FAO	CSHL	
	Implementing partners (MS701)	Organizations (e.g., NGOs, research institutes, government agencies) engaged through a contractual agreement to implement specific project components or provide technical services	Short term	Paid by FAO	PSS	
Individual experts	Expert roster	Database of vetted external experts readily available for fast deployment in short-term assignments, increasing rapid access to expertise for surge response or to complement limited in-house expertise during peak workloads	Short term	Paid by FAO	SSC with technical divisions	
	Knowledge hubs	Thematic platform connecting academics to advance research relevant for FAO's technical work	Long term	Pro-bono input	Technical divisions	
	External Communities of Practice	Formal networks of practitioners within and outside FAO, allowing FAO to access technical input on specific knowledge products through sustained peer exchange, co-creation, and collaboration	Short term	Pro-bono input	Technical divisions and/or regional offices	
	UN Volunteers	Deployment of volunteers through the UNV programme to support FAO's technical and operational activities, typically on short- to medium-term assignments	Medium term	Stipend paid by FAO or by donor	HR and UNV	
	Internships, fellowships and volunteers (IVF)	Programmes that enable students, recent graduates, and early-career professionals to contribute to FAO's technical and operational work while gaining practical experience and exposure to FAO's mandate	Medium to long term	Stipend paid by FAO or by donor	Technical divisions and HR	

Non exhaustive draft – to be further refined by PSU and through the process of pilots

PSU should work closely with technical units to identify the need for external expertise and support the operationalization of partnerships to meet this; OSP can also be a key support to the pilot positioning and learnings



OSP can also be a key supporting unit to the pilot, especially in terms of (i) ensuring the partnership goal links to FAO's strategic positioning, (ii) reviewing learnings from the pilot in the context of forward looking planning and scaling up of Transformative Partnerships

From the pilot, learnings and impact stories can be captured to elevate transformative partnership approaches and consider which structures can best support scaling these approaches across the organization

A. Set up a MEL framework for the pilot

- Set a clear vision for success and define a set of clear indicators to measure its effectiveness
- Gather engaged technical staff's perception on speed and quality of expertise accessed via partners, and the efficiency of the partnership process

B. Capture operational and impact lessons to inform scale-up

- Hold review sessions with pilot technical units, PSU, and OSP to share observations, adjust processes, and improve support
- Document what worked and what can be improved, e.g., quality of partners, internal coordination issues, and how the selected modality satisfied the input required
- Document short “impact stories” from the pilot showing:
 - Impact of the partnership on agrifood system outcomes
 - Unlocked expertise FAO did not have in-house
 - Faster or higher-quality technical products

C. Translate the pilot into an organization-wide approach

- Identify which additional technical units or cross-cutting areas would benefit most from applying this approach next
- Consider how approach can be scaled sustainably
 - PSU to consider possible engagement structures for supporting technical units (e.g., identifying ways for PSU to give targeted, proactive support on managing partnerships, or having frequent feedback sessions on quality of partners, modalities, and processes so that PSU can continually improve its strategies and support)
 - OSP and PSU to consider ways to bring the pilot learnings into future strategic planning around partnerships

To set up the pilot for success, clear and early communication is needed with relevant technical leads and staff to align on goals and build momentum

Enabling conditions for success	Critical enablers required
1. Ensure buy-in from technical units	• Position the pilot as a strategic exercise to strengthen FAO’s technical delivery, not only about improving partnership procedural process • Set a clear, shared goal for what the pilot aims to achieve, the expected benefits, and how success will be assessed • Communicate clearly with divisions on what the pilot entails, what will change, timelines, and expectations for divisions • Involve selected technical units as co-designers of the pilot
2. Capture learnings from the pilot and leverage these successes beyond the pilot	• Disseminate impact stories across technical units about the partnership success • Capture learnings beyond the impact on technical capacity (e.g., how to streamline partnership processes)

Case study: FAO Reference Centers for Animal Health illustrate how strategic partnerships can expand FAO's technical capabilities, accelerate delivery to Members, and build long-term institutional knowledge

FAO Reference Centers for Animal Health

- Reference Centres are external institutions designated by the Director-General to provide scientific and technical expertise in defined areas. They support the Animal Production and Health Division (NSA) work through continuous advice, technical inputs, laboratory and analytical services, and the development of standards, tools, and methodologies
- FAO currently runs around 60 reference centers for animal health across 25 thematic areas (e.g., AMR, foot-and-mouth disease, veterinary epidemiology)
- Reference centers are established through formal agreements in which the institution commits to providing at least 10 pro-bono working days of expert time, and managed by relevant thematic teams (e.g., the AMR working group oversees the establishment and management of AMR reference centers)

Why is external expertise via the Reference Centers needed?

FAO used Reference Centres for Animal Health precisely in areas where external partners have frontier scientific capabilities and comparative advantage:

- **Fast-evolving technical domain:** Areas such as microbiological and chemical hazard analysis, and laboratory methods for detecting contaminants, evolve rapidly requiring FAO to keep close relationships with other actors in the space to understand the latest trends
- **Localized and context-specific capacity:** Centres in different regions support country-specific technical needs, generating data and evidence tailored to national NSA action plans
- **Legitimacy and scientific credibility:** Affiliation with globally recognized research institutes strengthens FAO's authority when advising governments and standard-setting bodies

What works well about the Reference Center modality?

FAO's NSA work uses the Reference Centre modality to formalize multi-year collaboration with institutions that bring high-level and stable expertise:

- **Multi-year:** The Reference Centre arrangement ensures predictable support, avoiding fragmentation typical of shorter-term engagements.
- **Productive and pro-bono engagement:** Reference Centres commit defined, pro-bono days of expert time each year (in practice many end up providing more), ensuring engagements that translate in tangible outputs
- **Visibility through high-level specialized partner profile:** Institutes selected have decades of NSA leadership, advanced laboratory infrastructure, and globally recognized scientific staff
- **Mutually beneficial partnership:** Centres benefit through global visibility, access to FAO networks and data, and opportunities to influence normative work, while FAO benefits from frontier scientific knowledge and sustained collaboration

How does the partnership lead to a long-term, sustainable impact on technical capacity?

The Reference Centres for Animal Health are a strong example of how external expertise can be embedded into FAO to generate lasting impact:

- **Institutionalized knowledge generated:** Knowledge provided by Centres is integrated into FAO tools, guidance, and methodologies, informing work across the organization rather than remaining isolated within a single task
- **Cross-organizational leveraging of insights:** Lessons from Reference Centres inform global NSA programming, as well as country-level projects in Africa, Asia, and Latin America



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Proactive and transparent communication is a fundamental tool to shepherd effective change across FAO



Communicate the WHY

*Including the principles and processes that shaped the decisions, and **what FAO aims to achieve with the changes***

- Helps staff understand the purpose behind the changes, reducing uncertainty and speculation
- Builds motivation and alignment by linking the change to FAO's broader mission and strategic objectives.



Communicate the WHAT

*Including what is changing and what is staying the same; **making all changes clear***

- Ensures everyone has a common, factual understanding of what is changing, preventing confusion and misinterpretation
- Allows staff to anticipate how the change may affect their workflows, roles, or priorities.



Clarity on HOW

*Including clarity on **recommendation sponsors, timelines, sequencing logic, and support available for staff/ NSHR***

- Provides clarity on the steps, responsibilities, and resources available to staff/ NSHR, making implementation more predictable and manageable
- Strengthens accountability and coordination by making expectations and timelines explicit from the start.

FAO needs a coherent impact story for staff and leadership to understand how the reforms can translate into real improvements - helping build momentum, trust, and sustained adoption across the organization

Example of succinct impact narrative

Context

- FAO's technical capacity is central to delivering its mandate as a global knowledge institution
- Members increasingly rely on FAO for guidance on complex, cross-cutting issues
- Budget pressures require smarter, more efficient use of in-house and external expertise

Challenges

FAO is facing constraints to its ability to build and use technical capacity effectively, including:

1. Limited visibility of in-house expertise
2. Knowledge is easily lost or underused
3. Technical excellence is not consistently incentivized
4. Coordination across units and levels is weak
5. External expertise is not strategically leveraged

Proposed changes

- Establish a people directory and a KM function to strengthen visibility and management of expertise and knowledge
- Improve performance management, including clearer expectations and support to staff
- Update workforce policies (e.g., contract modalities and mobility options) to create a more flexible workforce and to deploy expertise where it is most needed
- Enhance cross-unit collaboration through pilots of working groups and dual reporting lines
- Apply a more structured, strategic approach to leveraging external expertise

Expected improvements

- Clearer visibility and coordination of technical expertise across FAO
- More consistent knowledge capture and sharing, reducing duplication and improving quality
- Stronger performance and career systems that better support technical excellence
- More targeted and effective use of external expertise where needed

Expected impact

- Higher-quality, more coherent technical outputs
- More efficient use of limited resources, including of staff time

Communication to various stakeholder groups must be tailored appropriately depending on how they are engaged with or impacted by the proposed changes

Stakeholder	Role in change journey	Communication needs
Responsible	- Execute the change activities (pilots, processes, system updates, training materials, consultations) - Test solutions and provide rapid feedback loops to refine the approach	- Must receive the opportunity to feed into the design and timelines - Must receive clear, actionable instructions on what is expected of them, including that they will need to advocate for change within the workstream they own - Need rapid-response channels to raise issues, ask questions, and receive clarifications, given that delays in guidance slow implementation
Accountable	- Set the direction, ambition, and success criteria for the change - Make final decisions when trade-offs arise - Ensure adequate resources, leadership backing, and cross-unit alignment	- Should receive high-level updates on progress, key milestones, emerging risks, and proposed adjustments in direction - Should receive synthesized evidence (e.g., early results, feasibility insights) when leadership action or resourcing is required
Consulted	- Provide expertise and contextual insights to ensure the change is technically sound - Validate whether solutions align with operational realities - Flag unintended consequences and help refine tools, guidance, or processes	- At key points, must be provided updates on implementation progress and engage in problem-solving and direction-setting - Must have timely, predictable opportunities to engage in problem-solving and direction-setting (e.g., reviews, workshops, consultations) - Should receive feedback on how their input was used for transparency and engagement
Informed	- Either tangible affected by change or not affected at all - Understand how the change affects their workflows, tools, or expectations - Prepare to adopt new behaviors or processes when required - Provide light-touch feedback through usage patterns or surveys	- If affected by change - Must receive communications from owners of each workstream on why that is changing and how it will affect them - Should be provided with reference guides, FAQs, and simple “how-to” materials to support adoption when relevant - Should receive impact stories showing the benefits of change - Must have a mechanism to ask questions related to the change efforts and get answers within a reasonable time - If not affected by the change - Should receive a broad piece of communication notifying of the change process and why it is taking place - Should be given high-level updates on key milestones

For each recommendation, tailored communication can be delivered in line with each stakeholders' expected relationship to the proposed changes

RACI of Phase 2 Technical Capacity Assessment Recommendations

Recommendation	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed
Establish an AI-enabled people directory searchable by expertise and skillset	HR	Director of Cabinet	Selected staff and NSHR for feedback	Staff and NSHR
Establish a dedicated KM team, oversight, and governance framework	KM Team	Chief Scientist	KM Advisory and Coordination Group, Regional focal points, Technical divisions	Staff and NSHR
Strengthen performance management, incentives, and consequences	HR	Director of Cabinet	Selected staff, managers and NSHR for feedback	Staff and NSHR
Establish fixed-term contracts as the long-term contract modality for ongoing positions	HR	Director of Cabinet	LEG, UGSS, AP-in-FAO	Staff and NSHR
Promote greater voluntary staff mobility through career pathways that reward geographic mobility	HR	CSH Director	Selected staff for feedback	Staff and NSHR
Selectively and strategically locate some HQ-reporting posts in Dos	OSP, HR, Technical Directors	Director of Cabinet	Hosting decentralized office leads	Staff and NSHR
Pilot dual reporting lines between HQ technical divisions and senior technical staff in Dos	OSP, Technical Directors in pilot Divisions	OSP Director	Staff included in pilots	Staff and NSHR
Pilot thematic working groups to help coordinate technical work across units	Working group leads in pilot	OSP Director	PPA focal points	Staff and NSHR
Pilot to work with select technical units to launch new partnerships	PSU and pilot technical divisions	DDG Martina	Pilot technical divisions and decentralized offices	Staff and NSHR

*Notes: Recommendation #2 related to bilateral grant management shifts and recommendation #3 related to PDD process shifts both have established groups working on details of the solution design and implementation; For less complex recommendations, owner may work directly with teams adopting the change without support from a working group.

An effective communication approach moves from broad, leadership-led messaging to targeted, team-level guidance and informal reinforcement, ensuring staff consistently understand the change and how to act on it

Channel type	Definition	Objective	Typical lead actors	When to use
Executive communication	Formal, organization-wide messaging from top leadership	Signal importance, set the narrative, ensure consistency across FAO	• DG • Core Leaders	• Launching the change • Announcing milestones • Reinforcing priorities
Manager-led communication	Team-level explanations and discussions led by managers	Translate change into practical implications, drive alignment and create space for questions	• Division Directors • Unit Heads • Line Managers	• Explaining “what this means for us” • Clarifying roles • Addressing concerns
Functional / technical guidance	Targeted instructions for specific groups who need to act	Provide clarity on processes, expectations, and required actions	• Division Directors • Regional Representatives	• Sharing new procedures, tools, templates, or step-by-step guidance
Town halls & large-group forums	Live, interactive sessions for broad staff groups	Build understanding, show leadership commitment, enable Q&A	• DG • Core Leaders • Change Team	• Major updates • Addressing cross-organizational questions
Change champion cascade	Peer-to-peer dissemination by selected influencers across HQ/RO/CO	Reinforce messages, localize them, sustain momentum, surface feedback early	• Change Champions in HQ, ROs, COs.	• Supporting adoption • Clarifying misunderstanding • Encouraging engagement

Change will require multiple, sustained communications that repeat core messages clearly and consistently to build understanding and reinforce new ways of working



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Monitoring the improvement of FAO's Technical Capacity overtime has two key components: tracking the impact of organizational changes, and whether technical capacity gaps are being closed

1

Have organizational changes had a positive impact on how expertise is built and accessed in the organization?

Monitor whether proposed recommendations have been implemented, whether implemented recommendations are leading to changes in behaviors and practices, and whether these changes in behaviors and practices are leading to improved ability to build, access, and leverage technical expertise



2

Are identified technical capacity gaps to meet current and future demand being filled?

Monitor whether improved ability to build, access, and leverage technical expertise at FAO as a result of implemented recommendations is serving to fill the technical capacity gaps required for FAO to deliver on its Strategic Framework identified in Phase 1

1

Have
organizational
changes had a
positive impact
on how
expertise is built
and accessed in
the
organization?

Methods for tracking MEL indicators at different levels:

- **Output indicators should be tracked on an ongoing basis by the dedicated taskforce**, which should be established to communicate and support implementation, monitor progress, and ensure learning informs scaling.
- **Outcome indicators should consist of two types:**
 1. **Technical data** (e.g., % human resources with complete profiles, distribution of PEMS ratings, etc.) should be captured through the tools that are being implemented in these recommendations (e.g., people directory, KM system, PEMS review system)
 2. **Staff feedback** (e.g., % of human resource in divisions and offices involved in pilot reporting having benefitted from a new partner in their work) should be captured through “feedback loops” built into the design of the interventions
- **Impact indicators** (e.g., % of managers who report improvement in ability to monitor and build technical capacity in their teams) should be assessed through a **periodical organization wide survey**. To assess change over time, FAO can either include an assessment in early 2026 to assess baseline values for the relevant indicators, or phrase questions in surveys following the start of implementation retrospectively (e.g., “Over the past XX months, have you felt an improvement in YYY”)

For each of the recommendations, progress to implement the recommendations, their uptake, and impact on the organization can be tracked

1

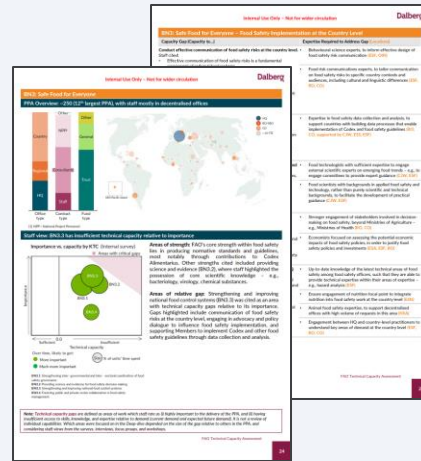
Have organizational changes had a positive impact on how expertise is built and accessed in the organization?

	Recommendation	Output indicators – “Is FAO implementing recommendations?”	Outcome indicators – “Is behaviour / practice within FAO changing?”	Impact indicators – “Is FAO better technical capacity improving?”
Must-have	Establish an AI-enabled people directory searchable by expertise and skillset	People directory platform developed and launched	% of staff/NSHR with complete profiles % of staff/NSHR using the directory	% of staff/.NSHR (at each level and overall) who report improvements in ability to identify and access in-house technical expertise % of staff/NSHR (at each level and overall) who report improvement in ability to access FAO knowledge sources and past learnings, and leverage them in their technical work % of managers who report an improvement in ability to monitor and build technical capacity in their teams % of decentralized office staff/NSHR that report improved relevance and quality of technical support received from HQ/RO % of staff/NSHR who report improved ability to leverage external expertise and partners
	Establish a dedicated KM team, oversight, and governance framework	- KM team established - KM vision/strategy drafted & endorsed - KM AI tools launched & scaled	# of knowledge products being codified # of downloads/views/users of knowledge products on KM databases	
	Strengthen performance management, incentives, and consequences	- Revised PEMS policy issued - Calibration pilot completed	Distribution of ratings (% of individuals receiving each score)	
Complement to people initiative	Establish fixed-term contracts as the long-term contract modality for ongoing positions	Policy updated	% of human resources on fixed-term vs other contract types	% of decentralized office staff/NSHR that report improved relevance and quality of technical support received from HQ/RO % of staff/NSHR who report improved ability to leverage external expertise and partners
	Promote greater voluntary staff mobility through career pathways that reward geographic mobility	- Job descriptions updated for senior roles with new experience requirements - Annual lateral-transfer program for P2/P3 staff established and run	# of positions opened for lateral transfer each cycle # of staff applying for lateral transfer each cycle # of lateral transfers completed per cycle	
	Selectively and strategically locate some HQ-reporting posts in Dos	# of HQ-reporting posts set-up in DOs	Feedback from both staff/NSHR in hosting DO and in HQ units with outposted team members on impact on relevance and quality of work	
Pilot	Pilot dual reporting lines between HQ technical divisions and senior technical staff in Dos	- Pilot(s) started - Pilot(s) completed & lessons captured	% of pilot staff reported improvements in the relevance and quality of their work as a result of dual reporting lines	% of decentralized office staff/NSHR that report improved relevance and quality of technical support received from HQ/RO % of staff/NSHR who report improved ability to leverage external expertise and partners
	Pilot thematic working groups to help coordinate technical work across units	- Pilot working group(s) established - Working group meetings held - Pilot lessons captured	% of working group members reporting stronger coordination across levels and units within the technical area	
	Pilot to work with select technical units to launch new partnerships	- Pilot(s) started - Partnerships established through pilot - Pilot lessons captured	% of people involved in pilot reporting improvements in the relevance and quality of their work as a result of the partnership(s)	

Overall capacity within the organization should be monitored over time, reviewing whether gaps identified in Phase 1 are closed, and using the new People Directory to provide analytics and identify new risks

2

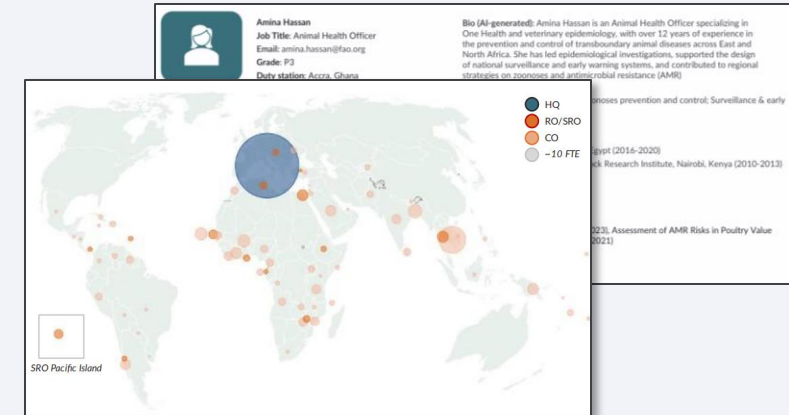
Are identified technical capacity gaps to meet current and future demand being filled?



The dedicated taskforce should work with directors and heads of office to track how current and future demands identified in Phase 1 of the Technical Capacity Assessment are being addressed. This may involve:

1. Reviewing the technical expertise requirements identified in Phase 1 together with directors and heads of office, and presenting them with options for how recommendations enable them to fill the identified gaps
2. Regular check-ins with directors and heads of office to discuss which expertise gaps have been filled and how (e.g., have any of the recommendations helped with this?)

Note: Expertise requirements may change over time, requiring a renewed assessment of technical capacity needs and gaps



The FAO should further leverage the skills-based People Directory to map the existence and location of expertise across the organization, to:

- Track progress on filling expertise needs synthesized in Phase 1 (e.g., growth in the number of staff with AI expertise)
- Run analytics to monitor for potential new gaps/risks of gaps emerging, including review (i) volume of internal expertise for areas signaled as having rising demand by Members, or (ii) expertise areas that are at-risk due to attrition or key-person risk (e.g., only one expert in a key topic that is set to retire in 2 years).

The background of the slide features a close-up photograph of a cacao pod hanging from a branch. The pod is brown and has a ribbed texture. The branch is also brown and has some small, dark spots. The background is slightly blurred, showing more of the branch and some green leaves. A solid yellow horizontal band is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the word "Annex" in a dark purple font.

Annex

100 FAO stakeholders were consulted in the Phase 2 Technical Capacity assessment, this built on the conversations and surveys from Phase 1 which covered hundreds of FAO stakeholders (1/2)

Role, Division	Stakeholder
Regional Representative, RAF	Abebe Haile Gabriel
FAOR	Adoniram Sanches Peraci
FAOR	Agustin Zimmermann
RPL, RNE	Ahmad Mukhtar
FAOR	Alexandre Huynh
Regional Representative, RAP	Alue Dahong
Strategy and Planning Officer, OSP	Anabella Kaminker
FAOR	Angelica Maria Jacome Daza
Human Resources Officer and Head of Business Intelligence and Analytics, CSHDA	Anne Kerins
Partnerships Specialist, ESF	Anouk DeVries
Process and e-Learning Management Specialist, RLC	Antonia Ljubetic
FAOR	Athman Mravili
FAOR	Ayman Omer
FAOR	Babagana Ahmadu
Core Leader, DDG	Beth Bechdol
Core Leader, ADG	Beth Crawford
FAOR	Bintia Stephen Tchicaya
FAOR	Carlos Aldeco Reyes
Strategy and Planning Officer, OSP	Charlotta Oqvist
Senior Legal Officer, LEG	Cristiana Mutiu
Senior IT Officer, CSI	Damir Zeric
Senior Advisor, OSP	David Conte
Technical Division Director, ESA	David Laborde
Director, CSI	Dejan Jakovljevic
Legal Counsel, LEG	Donata Rugarabamu
Regional Representative, RNE	Elawer Abdulhakim
Senior Strategy and Planning Officer, OSP	Elkhan Aliyev
Sub-Regional Coordinator, EA	Farayi Zimudzi
FAOR	Faten Adada
Deputy Director, PSU	Fatouma Seid

Role, Division	Stakeholder
PSS	Fiammetta Amendola
IT Officer, CSI	Francesco Carderini
Core Leader, DDG	Godfrey Magwenzi
Environmental Statistics Specialist, ESS	Griffiths ObliLaryea
FAOR	Guangzhou Qu
Deputy Legal Counsel, LEG	Guido Acquaviva
Senior Strategy Officer, OSP	Helene Sow
Senior Innovation Officer, OIN	Henry van Burgsteden
Senior Natural resources Officer, OCB	Inkar Kadyrzhanova
FAOR	Irina Buttoud
FAOR	Ivan Leon
FAOR	Jocelyn Brown Hall
Technical Division Director, ESS	Jose Alejandro Rosero Moncayo
FAOR	Jose Fernandez Filgueiras
FAOR	Juan Cheaz Pelaez
Senior Animal Health Officer, AMR	Junxia Song
FAOR	Kairat Nazhmidenov
Partnership Officer, PSU	Kaori Abe
Senior IT Officer, CSI	Karl Morteo
Technical Division Director, OCB	Kaveh Zahedi
FAOR	Ken Shimizu
Deputy Director, ESP	Lauren Philipps
FAOR	Lionel Dabbadie
Programme Officer, OSP	Lucia Colbacchini
Technical Division Director, ESN	Lynnette Marie Neufeld
Knowledge Management Specialist, RLC	Marcel Gonnet
Strategy and Planning Officer, OSP	Maria Magdalena Heinrich
Human Resources Officer and Head of Organizational Design, CSHDW	Massimiliano Casciana
Technical Division Director, NFI	Maunel Barange
Core Leader, DDG	Maurizio Martina

100 FAO stakeholders were consulted in the Phase 2 Technical Capacity assessment, building on the conversations and surveys from Phase 1 which covered hundreds of FAO stakeholders (2/2)

Role, Division	Stakeholder
Core Leader, Chief Economist	Maximo Torero Cullen
RPL, RLC	Maya Takagi
FAOR	Meshack Malo
Senior Communications Officer, OCC	Michelle Hoffman
Director, PSS	Mina Dowlatchahi
Technical Division Director, CFI	Mohamed Manssouri
RPL, RAF	Mphumuzi Sukati
FAOR	Nabil Assaf
FAOR	Nasar Hayat
FAOR	Nora Ourabah Haddad
FAOR	Oleg Guchgeldiyev
FAOR	Oleg Kobiakov
FAOR	Pablo Rabczuk
FAOR	Patrice Talla
Management Support and Compliance Team Leader, OER	Patrick Jacqueson
FAOR	Paulo Dias
FAOR	Priya Gujadhur
Senior Human Resources Officer and Head of Talent Management, CSHL	Rachael Cogen
RPL, REU	Raimund Jehle
FAOR	Raschad Al Khafaji
Economist, ESA-OER	Rebecca Pietrelli
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Role, Division	Stakeholder
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FAOR	Rodrigo Castaneda
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Deputy Director, OSP	Vasily Popov
Strategy and Planning Officer, OSP	Zhe Xiong
Regional Strategic Planning Officer, OSP	Victor Leon
FAOR	Vimlendra Sharan
Regional Representative, REU	Vioel Gutu
HR Officer, CSH	Yan Liu

This Phase of work built on the findings from the Phase 1 Technical Capacity Assessment. FAO stakeholder consultations in Phase 1 included:

- 70 interviews with FAO leadership, management, and FAO representatives,
- 19 focus groups with PPA global and regional leadership, covering 140 staff members
- 19 staff workshops covering 231 staff members,
- 755 detailed qualitative and quantitative internal survey results from 96 organizational units.