



EVALUATION SERVICE

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Evaluation of TeleFood

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TeleFood was established in 1997 to raise public awareness of food security issues through the sponsorship of cultural and sport events organized around the world. Proceeds from its fundraising activities are allocated in their entirety to financing grassroots-level projects intended to combat hunger and malnutrition.

The evaluation was a follow-up to the July 2005 evaluation on Cross-Organizational Strategy on Communicating FAO's Messages, which questioned the added value of TeleFood's efforts in achieving FAO goals. The evaluation examined TeleFood's efficiency and effectiveness in: 1) advocating to the general public FAO's basic messages on tackling hunger and food insecurity; 2) raising money to support the Organization in these strategic goals; and 3) the extent to which TeleFood projects were an effective use of the resources mobilised.

Between 1997 and 2005, 2,068 TeleFood projects were approved for a total value of US\$ 14,794,000, corresponding to a project average of US\$ 7,154. In the course of the evaluation, 323 final reports were reviewed and 25 projects were visited.

Findings

Institutional support for TeleFood is on the wane. Priority given to TeleFood has declined in terms of the level of attention it receives from senior management, staffing arrangements and the comparative share of Regular programme funding for the TeleFood unit.

Integration of TeleFood into an overall FAO advocacy and communication strategy. TeleFood has demonstrated its viability in mobilising funds from the public and in public awareness raising in a few countries. These activities now need to be fully integrated into a greater FAO institutional communications strategy. TeleFood, World Food Day, the Ambassador's Programme and FAO's mainstream development and emergency work should be fully integrated. TeleFood events have not made their audiences aware of the causes of hunger; at the international, national or local levels and of the multifaceted FAO activities in policy development, emergency response and field projects. They may even give the message that the multiplication of small TeleFood type projects is what is needed to successfully fight hunger, which is not the claim of FAO itself.

Targeting and performance. Evaluators found that TeleFood projects have not been particularly focused on poor countries nor have they benefited the most poor in the communities where they took place, although there has been an encouraging emphasis on women and children. It was found that TeleFood projects perform no better or worse in delivering sustainable benefits to the poor and malnourished than the average NGO project of this type. Very few community funds, or revolving funds, were put in place at the end of the projects.

Findings cont.

Transaction costs. The cost of running TeleFood projects is borne by the Regular Programme budget of the Organization and evaluators estimate it at 49% of direct project funding, compared to the 13% overhead cost on FAO technical cooperation development projects. The operational workload is excessive given the small size of the projects.

Comparative advantage. TeleFood projects do not maximise on FAO's comparative advantages. By definition, TeleFood projects are not intended to be innovative, so they cannot really serve as pilots or demonstrations drawing on leading edge technologies or approaches. Also they do not make any link between the macro and meso policy and institutional dimensions and the farming community.

Recommendations

■ **TeleFood projects should not be continued as separate entities.**

Funds mobilised from public donations should be used to support FAO's mainstream development and emergency work, which fully meet the criteria of addressing the needs of the poor.

■ **All FAO advocacy, information, and communication activities should be brought together into one unit.**

The World Food Day, Ambassador's programme and the TeleFood Unit with its mandate for advocacy and fund raising have all been combined in one entity. However, this still remained separate from the Information Division. This institutional break between advocacy, awareness raising, fundraising on one hand and information/communication on the other is not conducive to a coherent FAO Communication policy (this institutional merger has since been largely achieved).

■ **Communication strategy and branding.**

A clear concise corporate strategy for communication and advocacy should be developed for all FAO activities. Messages should be simple and direct and not restricted to TeleFood projects or the World Food Day theme. The use of several brands and logos by FAO dilutes its efficacy as a communicator. The public branding of TeleFood should be gradually phased out. All branding should be in the name of FAO.

■ **Donors.**

Advocacy and fund raising activities should focus on a few carefully selected countries with the highest potential for raising funds from the general public and local business sector. Donors should have some measure of opportunity to choose what they wish their donations to be used for and should receive information on ongoing work.

Management response to the evaluation

In its second response to the Governing Bodies, management stressed the importance of the communications aspect of the TeleFood Programme. Management stated that TeleFood's primary focus was in raising public awareness, and fundraising was only a "by-product". Management estimates for FAO overheads in running TeleFood projects were 13% and not 49% as mentioned in the report. Management provided proposals related to advocacy and fund-raising strategies, as well as measures to improve the targeting of projects and streamlining of procedures. It did not accept that TeleFood support should be directed towards FAO's wider development and emergency programmes, rather than individual TeleFood projects.

Most Committee Members found the expanded management response satisfactory. Some, however, felt the response to be unconvincing and that it did not fully address issues raised especially regarding criteria to guide advocacy and whether TeleFood projects should continue as separate entities.

While most members agreed that well designed small-scale projects assisted by TeleFood can contribute positively to household food security, others questioned the Organization's comparative advantage in this area, noting the high level of overheads and that many projects did not lead to sustainable benefits.

Some Members also questioned the efficacy of advocacy efforts to the general public. The Committee called for an advocacy and communication strategy, which it would review at a future session. The development of FAO's advocacy strategy to the general public should take account of the outcome of the Independent External Evaluation of FAO.

FAO Governing Bodies' conclusions (Programme Committee)

References

Evaluation of TeleFood PC 96/4 a).

Available at: <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/meeting/011/J8214E.pdf>

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