

Document: EB 2010/100/R.6
Agenda: 7(a)(ii)
Date: 4 August 2010
Distribution: Public
Original: English

E



Enabling poor rural people
to overcome poverty

Report of the Chairperson on the sixty-third session of the Evaluation Committee

Note to Executive Board representatives

Focal points:

Technical questions:

Luciano Lavizzari
Director, Office of Evaluation
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2274
e-mail: l.lavizzari@ifad.org

Dispatch of documentation:

Deirdre McGrenra
Governing Bodies Officer
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2374
e-mail: gb_office@ifad.org

Executive Board — 100th Session
Rome, 15-17 September 2010

For: Review

Report of the Chairperson on the sixty-third session of the Evaluation Committee

1. This report covers the deliberations of the Evaluation Committee during its sixty-third session on 15-16 July 2010. The six agenda items for discussion were: (i) Peer Review of IFAD's Office of Evaluation (IOE) and Evaluation Function; (ii) Preview of IOE's results-based work programme and budget for 2011 and indicative plan for 2012-2013; (iii) Interim evaluation of the Vegetable Oil Development Project (VODP) in Uganda; (iv) President's Report on the Implementation Status of Evaluation Recommendations and Management Actions with IOE's comments; (v) Reflections from the Evaluation Committee's country visit to Mozambique; and (vi) other business, which included two topics, namely a discussion on the preliminary findings of the ongoing corporate-level evaluation on gender equality and women's empowerment and the timing of the presentation to the Committee in 2010 of the Annual Report on the Results and Impact of IFAD's Operations (ARRI).
2. All Committee members (Brazil, Canada, Egypt, France, India, Indonesia, Ireland and the Netherlands) attended the session with the exception of Nigeria. Observers were present from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Cameroon, Germany, Guatemala and Sweden. The Committee welcomed Ms Adair Heuchen (Canada) and Ms Raphaele Simeoni (France), who were participating as Committee members for the first time. The Committee expressed its appreciation to outgoing members Ms Amalia Garcia Tharn (Sweden) and Mr Kent Vachon (Canada) for their useful contributions and hard work.
3. The Committee was joined by IFAD's Associate Vice-President, Programmes, Programme Management Department (PMD); the Chief Development Strategist of IFAD; the Director of IOE; the Secretary of IFAD; and others. Government representatives¹ from Uganda joined the session for the discussion of the interim evaluation of VODP in Uganda; the consultants' team leader² of the corporate-level evaluation (CLE) on gender equality and women's empowerment also joined the session for the pertinent agenda item.

A. Peer Review of IFAD's Office of Evaluation and Evaluation Function

4. The Committee discussed the next steps in the implementation of the Peer Review's recommendations.
5. While all the recommendations of the peer review found broad consensus among the members, the Committee noted that there were areas where Management's comments could add value. For example, members concurred with Management's suggestion that a head-hunting firm be recruited to identify a candidate for the position of Director, IOE, if required.
6. Committee members reaffirmed the need for an independent process for the appointment, dismissal and annual performance review of the Director, IOE, to ensure the full independence of IOE. Furthermore, members agreed that the processes for the appointment and promotion of IOE staff should be in conformity with the relevant IFAD policies, with final decisions on these matters being taken exclusively by the Director, IOE. It was noted that the President, who wished to reserve the right to agree or disagree with the selection of staff under contract with IFAD, could do so by making his position known to the Executive Board.
7. With regard to the question of audits of IOE, while the Committee expressed a preference for consultation before an audit be undertaken, the lead role of the Audit

¹ Mr Bulegeya, Commissioner for Plant Protection, Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, Uganda, and Mr Robert Sabiti, Alternate Permanent Representative, Embassy of Uganda in Rome.

² Ms Hendrika Stuart.

Committee and the need to distinguish between the governance roles of the Audit and Evaluation Committees, as subsidiary bodies of the Executive Board, was noted.

8. The Committee discussed the implementation of the Peer Review recommendations and the need to keep the Executive Board informed of progress and issues which may arise. With respect to the latter, it was agreed that updates would be included on the agenda of future sessions of the Evaluation Committee and subsequently reported to the Executive Board.
9. The Committee requested IOE and Management to prepare a draft terms of reference for the proposed consultant and estimated costs, including a detailed time line for implementation of Action Plan deliverables. This proposal – which would also address the roles and responsibilities of the Committee, IOE and Management relative to the deliverables – will be discussed at the next session of the Evaluation Committee and would form the basis for the selection of the consultant.

B. Preview of the Office of Evaluation's results-based work programme and budget for 2011 and indicative plan for 2012-2013

10. The Committee expressed its broad agreement with the Office of Evaluation's proposed objectives, divisional management results, work programme and budget for 2011. A number of Committee members expressed their appreciation for the quality of the Preview document. The Committee noted that it looked forward to receiving the indicators to track the achievement of the divisional management results in the next submission at its forthcoming October 2010 session.
11. The Committee took note of the savings that IOE is generating, mainly through the transfer of certain responsibilities, and expressed its support for continued efforts by IOE in this direction. The Committee asked for more information on efficiency gains, as they materialize, and requested a chart comparing the IFAD and IOE administrative budgets. As an example, IOE stated that it would be working on more country programme evaluations next year, in full-time equivalent, than in past years.
12. Some members pointed to the need for caution in the reduction of the budget, which was a visible trend in the last few years, and underlined the importance for IOE to have adequate resources to implement its evaluation work programme.
13. The Committee was reassured by the fact that IOE does not plan to abandon the evaluation of IFAD-funded projects, given that it will be undertaking project completion report (PCR) validations and project performance assessments (PPAs) in 2011, which are less costly and can be undertaken more quickly. In this regard, pilots for both PCR validation and PPAs were recognized as important for the development of a coherent methodology and process before the end of the year.
14. The Committee highlighted the importance of IOE undertaking joint evaluations. Efforts in this regard will be documented in the final work programme and budget document to be submitted at the October 2010 session.
15. As requested by the Committee, IOE will illustrate in the next submission of the document how its objectives and divisional management results contribute to achieving IFAD's strategic objectives.
16. The Committee emphasized the importance for IOE to continue to ensure that adequate measures are deployed to further strengthen the quality of its staffing and products by performing internal peer reviews, carrying out training, etc.
17. The Evaluation Committee further noted that, as recommended by the Peer Review, the Office of Evaluation has not budgeted for a dedicated country visit of the Evaluation Committee in 2011. The Committee was informed that Management was

considering including the required funds in the administrative budget of IFAD for the coming year. The Secretary of IFAD also indicated that no staff transfer has been foreseen for the shift of servicing of the Evaluation Committee from IOE to the Office of the Secretary.

C. Interim evaluation of the Vegetable Oil Development Project (VODP) in Uganda

18. The Committee discussed the interim evaluation summary of VODP in Uganda.
19. The Government representative stressed the significant positive impact of the project in improving incomes and reducing rural poverty in the areas covered by VODP. The VODP's focus on public-private partnership (PPP) has been deemed successful, and the Government has now moved towards establishing "commodity platforms" for a wide variety of agricultural commodities, whereby all players in a specific commodity chain come together to discuss issues and coordinate activities. Furthermore, the Government representative highlighted the importance of continued support by IFAD to the essential oils commodity chain.
20. In addition, the Committee raised the issue of sustainability, particularly in terms of ensuring the continued stream of benefits to smallholder farmers, within the context of the partnership with the private sector. Furthermore, the Committee emphasized the importance of considering environmental sustainability issues in the next phase of the project.
21. Members also called on Management to analyse the market opportunities in project design and implementation in order to ensure benefits for rural poor people in general.
22. The Committee stressed the importance in the future for evaluations to be discussed by the Committee before an eventual follow-up project or country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP) is presented to the Executive Board, noting that it was unfortunate that this did not occur in the case of the VODP phase II, which was approved by the Board in April 2010. IFAD Management clarified that the discussion of the second phase of the project was brought forward to the April 2010 session of the Executive Board because of the need to have the associated loan presented and approved in the Ugandan Parliament.
23. In the context of large PPP-type projects, Members emphasized the need for IFAD to ensure that project design adequately targets smallholders as the main beneficiaries. The second phase of the project, approved in April 2010, addressed this need.
24. The Committee also noted that, as stated by the IFAD country programme manager for Uganda, this project has multiple and evolving objectives. While IFAD-funded projects may have a series of wider benefits, their overall objectives must focus on alleviating rural poverty for the IFAD target group, namely the rural poor and smallholder farmers, as captured in the Uganda COSOP and the development objectives of the IFAD Strategic Framework.
25. On a more general note, several Members underlined the need for IFAD-financed operations and evaluations to deal with gender issues in a comprehensive manner.

D. President's Report on the Implementation Status of Evaluation Recommendations and Management Actions (PRISMA) with IOE's comments

26. The Committee reviewed and discussed the PRISMA, in addition to IOE's comments. Members expressed appreciation for a valid document.
27. The Committee noted with satisfaction the improvement in IFAD's performance in terms of responding to IOE evaluation recommendations, demonstrating a steady improvement in the learning loop between evaluation and operations over time.

28. Members noted the continued limited responsiveness of borrowing countries in addressing IOE evaluation recommendations, as indicated by the relatively lower level of uptake of recommendations. Members requested Management to consider options and possible measures to encourage governments to adopt evaluation recommendations in a more timely manner.
29. The Committee also highlighted the fact that, while gender issues are raised in the report, no specific recommendations are made on how performance can be further improved in this area.
30. The importance of finding opportunities to partner and cooperate with other development organizations to establish working country presence models was also stressed by the Committee. This would also help improve IFAD's performance in non-lending activities, including policy dialogue.

E. Reflections from the Evaluation Committee's country visit to Mozambique

31. The Committee discussed the draft report prepared by the Chairman on the country visit to Mozambique in May 2010. Based on the inputs received from members, the report was revised and will be submitted for the Board's consideration at its September 2010 session.

F. Other Business

Update on the corporate-level evaluation on gender

32. The Committee welcomed the presentation made by IOE on the preliminary results of the ongoing gender CLE.
33. Members noted the usefulness of presentations being made at an early stage in the CLE process.
34. The Committee discussed the issues raised in the presentation, and a frank exchange of views took place, with useful feedback provided by members to the IOE evaluation team.
35. Members noted, for instance, that there was no reference to the Millennium Development Goals in the presentation, and that a number of the emerging recommendations seem to raise serious issues related to corporate culture changes, which require a systemic, institution-wide response.
36. IFAD Management noted that it was aware of these issues and their importance.
37. The final evaluation report will be discussed by the Committee at its session on 26 November, and thereafter at the Board in December 2010.

Timing of the presentation of the 2010 ARRI to the Evaluation Committee

38. The Committee discussed the IOE proposal to postpone the presentation of the 2010 ARRI from October to the last session of the Evaluation Committee this year, scheduled for 26 November. IFAD Management explained that the proposal had been developed jointly with IOE and it was in full agreement with the way forward.
39. The rescheduling would allow time for: (i) Management to prepare its written comments to be presented with the ARRI; and (ii) both IOE and Management to further elaborate the 2010 ARRI learning theme, namely, efficiency.
40. The Committee concurred with the proposal to consider the 2010 ARRI at the last Evaluation Committee session of the year, in November. It is the Committee's understanding that this will become a permanent change in the schedule of the ARRI presentation to the Committee. The Committee agreed – in substitution – to discuss the Completion Evaluation of the Raymah Area Development Project in Yemen at the October session, which was originally planned for consideration by the Committee during its November 2010 session.