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![IFAD logo: Enabling poor rural people to overcome poverty]

Progress report
on the implementation of the IFAD Strategy
for Knowledge Management and the
innovation agenda

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Abbreviations and acronyms

AfDB	African Development Bank
AGRA	Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa
APR	Asia and the Pacific Division
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
COM	Communications Division
ESA	East and Southern Africa Division
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
ICT	Information and Communications Technology Division
IDRC	International Development Research Institute
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
PMD	Programme Management Department
PTA	Policy and Technical Advisory Division
RB-COSOP	results-based country strategic opportunities programme
RIDE	Report on IFAD's Development Effectiveness
SKM	Office of Strategy and Knowledge Management
WCA	West and Central Africa Division

Progress report on the implementation of the IFAD Strategy for Knowledge Management and the innovation agenda

I. Introduction

1. In April 2007, the Executive Board approved the IFAD Strategy for Knowledge Management with the ultimate goal of enabling IFAD to better deliver on its mandate. The objective of the strategy is to improve knowledge-sharing and learning both within IFAD and with IFAD's partners outside the organization. This progress report marks the end of the three-year time frame envisaged for implementing the strategy. In future, the Report on IFAD's Development Effectiveness (RIDE) will report on the evolution and progress of IFAD's knowledge management agenda.

2. As a follow-up to the corporate-level evaluation of IFAD's capacity to promote innovation and scaling up conducted by the IFAD Office of Evaluation (EB 2010/99/R.7), IFAD Management decided to integrate the knowledge management and innovation agendas. Consequently, this document also provides an overview on the implementation of the innovation agenda.

3. This final progress report provides an update on the progress made in 2010 in the implementation of the knowledge management strategy. Given the recent integration of the two agendas, the document also provides an overview of progress made in implementing the innovation strategy.

4. In implementing the knowledge management and innovation strategies, IFAD's prime objective has been to instil a learning and innovation-friendly culture and to build synergies among knowledge management and innovation initiatives and activities. The text that follows summarizes the achievements and outlines the opportunities and challenges for delivering on the knowledge management and innovation agenda in 2011.

II. Results achieved in 2010 in the areas of knowledge management and innovation

5. Implementation of the knowledge management strategy is guided by the four strategic objectives listed below. This section reports on progress made towards these objectives:

    - Strengthen knowledge-sharing and learning processes;

    - Foster partnerships for broader knowledge-sharing and learning;

    - Promote a supportive knowledge-sharing and learning culture; and

    - Equip IFAD with a more supportive knowledge-sharing and learning infrastructure.

Strengthen knowledge-sharing and learning processes

6. In 2010 IFAD continued to build on the achievements of previous years and consolidated efforts to embed knowledge-sharing at the regional and country levels and at headquarters. IFAD also consolidated the mainstreaming of knowledge-sharing and learning in regional and country-led processes, such as project design, annual review meetings of results-based country strategic opportunities programmes (RB-COSOPs), regional implementation workshops and portfolio reviews. At the same time, workshops and learning events at headquarters also benefited from knowledge-sharing methods such as World Café, storytelling, peer assists, after-action reviews and chat shows. These efforts have enhanced the

organizational culture and created a more conducive learning and sharing environment.

7. Regional divisions are systematically addressing knowledge management as part of the RB-COSOPs and supervision missions, and are increasingly including knowledge management components and activities in project design. IFAD-funded projects and programmes are now capturing lessons emerging from their activities and sharing these at the local, national, regional and global levels. Increasingly, projects are allocating resources to knowledge management-related activities as part of the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) budget.

8. For example, the Asia and the Pacific Division (APR) has adopted a systematic approach in addressing knowledge management during supervision missions. APR continues its practice of peer–to-peer debriefing meetings at headquarters to share learning, discuss challenges emerging from supervision activities and come up with new ideas and ways to improve this process.

9. Another good example of progress in this area is the replication of learning routes – as a South-South cooperation mechanism – in the East and Southern Africa, and Asia and the Pacific regions. Learning routes are designed and implemented by the Corporation for Regional Rural Development Training (PROCASUR), a Latin American training organization specialized in capacity-building. IFAD cofinances learning routes through its regional grant programmes.

10. Learning routes bring together rural development workers and partners in a series of thematic visits to communities that have faced development challenges. Participants visit rural development projects to learn about the struggles experienced by small-scale entrepreneurs when trying to start their businesses and how they achieve success. This is an enriching experience both for visitors – mainly development professionals of various disciplines, community leaders and policymakers – and for their hosts, and provides opportunities for discussion and collective analysis. In the past, learning route themes have included ecotourism, rural microenterprise, rural microfinance, gender equality and women's empowerment.

11. IFAD's portfolio of 235 ongoing programmes and completed operations constitutes a key source of learning and knowledge. In recent years the five regional divisions and the Policy and Technical Advisory Division (PTA) have invested considerable human and financial resources in capturing knowledge emerging from IFAD-funded activities and experience on the ground. The knowledge captured features in documents such as the RIDE, portfolio reviews and country programme and corporate evaluations. To further enhance this process the Programme Management Department (PMD) organized a learning event to share the experiences, challenges and opportunities of the IFAD portfolio with IFAD staff on a wider scale.

12. IFAD places great importance on contributing to and developing analytical publications to share the wealth of knowledge and experience accumulated through its regional and country operations. The establishment of the Office of Strategy and Knowledge Management (SKM), led by the Chief Development Strategist, highlights Management's commitment to further strengthening IFAD's analytical efforts.

13. In 2010, IFAD published its flagship publication, the *Rural Poverty Report 2011.* The report provides a coherent and comprehensive look at rural poverty, its global consequences and the prospects for its eradication. It also contains updated IFAD estimates of how many poor people there are in developing countries, poverty rates in rural areas and the percentage of poor people living in rural areas. The report was first launched at Chatham House, London, followed by a number of regional and national launches.

14. In 2010, IFAD developed numerous knowledge products and publications in-country and at headquarters, including: occasional papers; thematic publications such as

Gender dimensions of agricultural and rural employment: Differentiated pathways out of poverty; operational guidelines for mainstreaming knowledge management and/or gender in IFAD-funded projects; and learning sheets aimed at improving project management based on good practice.

15. The Asia and the Pacific (APR), West and Central Africa (WCA), East and Southern Africa (ESA) Divisions have invested time and resources in building the capacity of project management staff to become better knowledge workers and improve their skills in capturing knowledge generated by IFAD-funded interventions and sharing it with a broader audience.

16. ESA continued the work started in 2009 and conducted additional training workshops on how to integrate knowledge management into all aspects of project management, such as M&E, financial management, supervision and reporting. To date, the following countries have benefited from the training: Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Madagascar, Mozambique, Rwanda, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia.

17. In collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), APR continued to enhance the knowledge-sharing skills of IFAD project staff by organizing "write–shops". WCA organized a number of systematization and Web 2.0 workshops to improve the knowledge-sharing capacity of project staff.

18. In 2010, the Communications Division (COM) consolidated the use of social media and social reporting at headquarters and at the country and project levels. Starting in February 2010 with the Farmers' Forum, followed by the Governing Council session and other events such as regional implementation workshops, and culminating in the launch of the *Rural Poverty Report 2011* in December 2010, IFAD used social media and social reporting to provide live coverage of events. Thanks to the use of social media tools, IFAD was able to share its knowledge, messages and key products with millions of people not only with those active in the development arena but also with others who may not have been familiar with IFAD's work. Today IFAD is an established name in the social media world and is used as a model by other organizations. IFAD's social reporting blog, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, BlipTV and Slideshare channels are regarded as strategic knowledge-sharing mechanisms and tools.

Foster partnerships for broader knowledge-sharing and learning

19. In 2010 IFAD continued its joint efforts with the Rome–based United Nations agencies and increased collaboration with the FAO Investment Centre on design and supervision. IFAD collaborates with FAO in areas of strategic importance such as gender, land and rural finance. Initial results are emerging from research on experiences in promoting market access through value chains that has been conducted by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) in four countries with IFAD programmes.

20. PTA reinforced its collaboration with the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) to support basic research on developing technologies to increase the productivity of smallholder farmers or promote the use of sustainable agricultural practices.

21. In 2010 IFAD collaborated with the International Livestock Research Institute, FAO and the CGIAR ICT-KM (Information and Communications Technology-Knowledge Management) Program to support the organization of the Africa AgKnowledge Share Fair in Ethiopia. Some 300 practitioners, mostly from Africa, including staff from IFAD-funded projects and programmes, gathered in Addis Ababa to exchange notes and learn from one another. During the three-day event participants were able to share their experiences in land tenure systems, climate change adaptation, livestock practices, use of social media and knowledge-sharing methods and tools.

22. Regional divisions expanded their partnerships. For example, the Latin America and the Caribbean Division collaborated with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) to provide input to policy dialogue on rural poverty reduction in Chile, El Salvador and Mexico. ESA forged a partnership with the African Rural and Agricultural Credit Association (AFRACA) and the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) that is focused on rural finance, market access and knowledge management. APR has worked in partnership with FAO to provide ongoing projects and programmes with training in how to capture and share knowledge.

23. SKM increased its collaboration with a number of United Nations agencies and international financial institutions such as African Development Bank (AfDB), FAO, IFPRI, International Labour Organization (ILO) and World Bank. One of the many outputs of these partnerships was a joint FAO-IFAD-ILO publication.

Promote a supportive knowledge-sharing and learning culture

24. In 2010, Senior Management launched the IFAD staff awards programme. The purpose of this programme is to recognize the outstanding contribution of staff – whether individually or as a team – and to encourage staff to achieve higher levels of performance. The Chief Development Strategist, in his capacity as knowledge management and innovation champion, led this initiative.

25. For the first time in IFAD's history, thanks to this initiative, staff had an opportunity to nominate peers for their exceptional performance in the following categories: leadership; designing and implementing innovative or outstanding projects; and effective agents and facilitators of change.

26. The IFAD awards programme is informed by Daniel Pink's paradigm. Pink argues that "the secret to high performance and satisfaction [...] is the deeply human need to direct our own lives, to learn and create new things, and to do better by ourselves and our world." Inspired by this thinking, the IFAD Awards Committee, in reviewing the nominations, focused on rewarding motivation and more specifically the three elements of true motivation – autonomy, mastery and purpose.

27. The Chief Development Strategist, as the chair of the Awards Committee, reported that the committee received a total of 60 nominations. Fourteen colleagues were nominated under the leadership category, 20 for designing and implementing outstanding projects, and 26 as agents and facilitators of change.

28. After reviewing the nominations, the Awards Committee, which was composed of staff from all departments, selected four outstanding staff members and two outstanding teams. The 2011 edition will pay tribute to many more motivated and inspiring colleagues.

29. In 2010, PMD organized a number of knowledge-sharing events, such as the forum for country programme managers (CPMs) and country programme officers (CPOs), which provided a platform to discuss and address key issues related to country programmes. This forum acted as catalyst to enhance collaboration among and between CPMs and CPOs and led to recommendations to PMD management about improving processes and changing current practices. In 2010 IFAD continued its efforts to organize interactive knowledge–sharing events at the regional and country levels and at headquarters (see paragraph 6), thus creating a platform for staff to share their knowledge, experience and ideas.

Equip IFAD with a more supportive knowledge-sharing and learning infrastructure

30. In 2010, IFAD continued to enhance the knowledge-sharing capacity of staff at headquarters and in the field. COM, in collaboration with the Information and Communications Technology Division (ICT), continued to conduct training sessions to familiarize staff and line managers with Web 2.0 tools such as blogs, microblogs (Twitter), social bookmarking and collaboration tools such as Wiki and Google applications.

31. As a result of these efforts IFAD established a cross-departmental social reporting team that uses social media channels to share IFAD's message and the learning and knowledge generated by projects. In 2010, an increased number of staff and managers contributed to the IFAD social reporting blog. Contributors ranged from country programme managers sharing their experience while on a supervision mission and colleagues reporting live from regional implementation workshops or other events, to participants of learning routes and other types of South-South exchange sharing their insights and experience.

32. For example, in December 2010, IFAD mounted a social media campaign to launch its flagship publication, the *Rural Poverty Report 2011*. A number of social media channels and tools were used to build momentum leading up to the main launch event. On the day of the launch – 6 December 2010 – the Rural Poverty Report Twitter campaign reached 467,166 people, which resulted in the dedicated webpage receiving 5,660 page views that day and 792 users downloading the report. Report-related Facebook entries were shared with more than 8,550 people and the videos were viewed by over 1,250 people. IFAD also hosted two virtual chats on Facebook and Twitter, allowing the general public to interact and pose questions to the lead author and the rest of the report team.

33. The mainstreaming of social media tools is providing colleagues with new opportunities for sharing experience and engaging with a much wider audience on relevant topics. At the same time, training has also led to improvements in the content of blogposts. Staff are also encouraged to use the social reporting blog as a substitute for back-to-office reports.

34. To further develop IFAD's analytical capacity and ensure that IFAD can always avail itself of the right information at the right time, SKM commissioned a study to identify gaps in IFAD's information systems and opportunities for improvement.

III. Knowledge management competencies assessment framework

35. In February 2009 IFAD adapted Collison and Parcell's well-known knowledge self-assessment framework to evaluate the progress made in implementing the knowledge management strategy. In February 2010, a second assessment was organized involving approximately 50 staff members and managers from across the Fund. This year the assessment was conducted through an electronic survey sent to a wide group of staff members at headquarters and in country offices and external partners. The table below provides a comparison of this year's results with the previous two years.

36. The knowledge management self-assessment is a strategic planning and benchmark tool offering a matrix organizations can use to evaluate their current level of "knowledge management maturity" against a set of competencies, such as leadership behaviour, networking and communities, and capturing and reapplying knowledge. The tool measures the organization's maturity with respect to each competency across five levels, ranging from awareness of knowledge management practices (level 1) to incorporating knowledge management practices into core business processes (level 5). The tool also facilitates the identification of strengths and weaknesses and allows knowledge management practices, trends and outliers to be mapped.

37. It is important to note that the self-assessment ratings are not scientific, but rather reflect perceptions. However, the results are useful and can trigger reflection and discussion.

38. In 2008, the self-assessment positioned IFAD's knowledge competencies maturity between levels 2 and 3 – that is, somewhere between "reaction" and "action". In 2009, the ratings were at the same level, with a few exceptions. Overall, colleagues

seemed to have a better understanding of what the competencies really meant, and thus were in a better position to make an informed decision and critically evaluate themselves.

39. Conducting the self-assessment using an online survey allowed IFAD to ask a large number of staff members and managers at headquarters and country offices and a number of external partners to assess IFAD's knowledge management maturity. Over 70 people responded, of which 66 per cent were IFAD headquarters staff, 19 per cent country office staff and the remaining 15 per cent external partners.

40. The 2010 assessment shows **improvements** in three out of eight competencies, namely, "taking a strategic approach", "building a learning organization" and "measuring value". No change was observed for "leadership and support", "networking and communities", "capturing and reapplying knowledge" and "implementing efficiencies in work practices". "Innovation" was rated lower than in 2009.

41. As mentioned above, these average ratings give an indication of perceptions and do not provide the full picture of progress made in 2010. The results show that 70 per cent of respondents rank IFAD at level 3 or higher for six out of eight competencies; 30 per cent of respondents rate IFAD at level 2 or below. These figures compare positively with last the two years, when approximately 55 per cent of respondents rated IFAD's knowledge management maturity at level 3 and 45 per cent rated IFAD at level 2 or below.

42. A number of respondents rated IFAD at level 4 (consistently applying) for the following five knowledge management competencies: "taking a strategic approach", "leadership and support", "networking and communities", "measuring value" and "capturing and reapplying knowledge". This year's overall result puts IFAD firmly at level 3.

Overview of maturity level by knowledge competency

Knowledge management competencies	2008	2009	2010
Taking a strategic approach	3	2.5	3
Leadership and support	3	3	3
Building a learning organization	3	2.5	3
Networking and communities	3	3	3
Measuring value	2	2	2.5
Capturing and reapplying knowledge	2	2.7 `	2.7
Innovation	2	2.6	2.3
Implementing efficiencies in work practices	2	2.5	2.5

43. The written comments suggested less pronounced progress for "innovation" and "implementing efficiencies in work practices". The comments also indicate that IFAD continues to make good progress, in particular by increasing the use of knowledge-sharing methods and opportunities across the organization, and has improved knowledge capturing at the regional and country levels.

44. The results show that the implementation of the knowledge management strategy is bearing fruit and knowledge management activities are adding value. IFAD is now strategically applying knowledge management practices in business processes such as RB-COSOPs, project design, supervision and portfolio review. Knowledge management is practised and valued at the regional, country and headquarters levels. Managers have created a conducive environment for knowledge-sharing and are increasingly promoting and encouraging knowledge-sharing practices.

45. From the results it is clear that there is still work to be done to reach a level 5 rating – **the way we work** – in all eight competencies. Today, IFAD has a solid

foundation in six out of eight competencies and is thus in an excellent position to achieve this goal in the near future.

46. IFAD is committed to making progress in instilling a culture of innovation and increased efficiencies in work practices. As recommended in the corporate-level evaluation, specific activities are planned to address the organizational innovation culture. The ongoing effort to enhance IFAD's efficiency is expected to provide insights that can be used to improve this area in the coming years.

IV. A corporate innovation agenda

47. The evaluation of IFAD's innovation capacity and recommendations were presented to the April 2010 Executive Board. IFAD Management agreed with the main findings and recommendations and committed to their implementation. The recommendations were: (i) **Define an innovation agenda for IFAD** with a two-pronged approach: the "big bet" and the decentralized approach ("let a thousand flowers bloom"); (ii) **Treat scaling up as mission-critical** for IFAD and include it in programme and project design from the very start; and (iii) **Strengthen organizational capabilities and culture** through investments to promote and reward innovation, creativity and risk-taking by staff and managers.

48. The evaluation advocated adopting a "big bet" approach that would give strategic direction and focus to innovation efforts while maintaining the decentralized approach to innovation.

49. In 2010, having consulted with colleagues especially in PMD, SKM agreed that the "big bet" approach should build on project experience and not stifle the decentralized approach to innovation. The challenge for IFAD is to identify areas in which more deliberate effort is needed to come up with better solutions to tackle specific challenges across countries and regions.

50. Over the past year, the Fund has engaged in a number of initiatives that have identified challenges requiring better solutions. The new IFAD Strategic Framework 2011–2015, the *Rural Poverty Report 2011* and the recent Conference on New Directions for Smallholder Agriculture, all emphasize the challenge of **transforming smallholder agriculture beyond subsistence into a profitable business that is linked to local, national and global value chains.**

51. To be relevant, the corporate innovation agenda will need to address the strategic challenge of smallholder agriculture transformation. Preliminary assessments have identified the following three areas of focus for IFAD innovation:

  • Promotion of the collective action and participation of smallholder farmers in modern value chains;

  • Gender equality and women's empowerment in agriculture; and

  • Sustainable agricultural intensification.

52. The final list of challenges will be developed through a consultation process involving SKM, PMD and a selection of external partners such as AGRA, CGIAR, IFPRI, the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and others. Once the challenges are prioritized, the process of developing better solutions can start. Thus the first priority of any innovation programme is to develop a rich pipeline of ideas.

53. With respect to the recommendation made in the evaluation that more work and investment should be channelled into making IFAD's organizational culture more conducive to innovation, IFAD will establish a training programme offering courses on innovation management, coaching, creative problem-solving, and leadership development. These training courses will help build new competencies and behaviours that will contribute to creating more of a risk-taking culture.

54. IFAD needs to develop its capacity to act on new knowledge, to understand where the obstacles lie and devise ways to overcome them. As part of the broader innovation agenda, through a process of consultation with IFAD staff, IFAD will seek to better understand what prevents staff from using new knowledge and mainstreaming innovative projects in IFAD operations

55. SKM will facilitate the implementation of the innovation agenda and work with PMD and external partners to:

- Take stock of existing collaborations and partnerships that support innovation at the global and regional levels, together with the lessons learned from them (for example the partnership with IFPRI);

- Identify potential partners to support innovation among development agencies, government agencies, private foundations, research institutes, associations representing the rural poor, and in the private sector;

- Define areas for the potential development of partnerships with global partners, such as World Bank's Innovation Marketplace; and

- Pilot innovative collaborations with private foundations, the private sector and others. Document lessons learned from these collaborations to help forge future partnerships.

56. The corporate innovation agenda will be financed through various sources. Overall priority will be given to supporting innovations conducted in partnership with institutions and agencies that bring skills and knowledge to complement IFAD's capabilities. Global and regional grant programmes will be used to launch research aimed at developing new solutions for a selection of challenges as described above. Remaining resources allocated under the Initiative for Mainstreaming Innovation will provide "seed money" for incubating ideas. Ideas thus incubated that have potential will feed into the grants and will be scaled up. Stand-alone innovative prototypes and/or those of a longer duration may avail of small grants or supplementary funding.

V. Implementation of knowledge management and innovation in 2011 and beyond

57. Over the last three years implementation of IFAD's knowledge management and innovation strategies has built a solid foundation under the leadership of senior and middle management. Staff at headquarters and in country offices have been instrumental in implementing the knowledge management strategy and have embedded knowledge management-related activities and deliverables in IFAD business processes and regional and country programmes.

58. In addition to increasing its own capacity, IFAD has strengthened its impact by working with partners. As a result, the Fund has extended its institutional outreach and partnerships with global knowledge-based organizations such as CGIAR, FAO, World Bank and regional partners such as AfDB, AGRA, Asian Development Bank (AsDB) and IDRC.

59. IFAD country programme managers are increasingly asked by borrowers to provide IFAD-specific knowledge and develop innovations based on the experience accumulated over the last thirty years through IFAD operations and show how these are being up scaled and applied in different countries.

60. The Strategic Framework 2011–2015 indicates that IFAD plans to enhance its role as a knowledge broker among Member States by leveraging its experiences to develop knowledge products and learning tools and by facilitating South-South cooperation. This will also entail capturing the successful experiences of middle-income countries and sharing them with low-income countries.

61. During this three-year implementation period, IFAD has made good progress in integrating knowledge management into business processes, particularly in key stages of the project cycle such as the RB-COSOP, project design, supervision and project completion. IFAD has also improved learning and knowledge-sharing practices in country programmes. What remains a challenge is improving the systematic capture of knowledge and putting in place efficient project M&E systems that can help to capture and generate knowledge enabling IFAD to design and implement better projects and programmes.

62. IFAD will need to invest in order to improve its ability to facilitate and promote knowledge-sharing within and among countries, governments and among farmers from different countries and regions. The work to replicate and expand learning routes in the Asia and the Pacific and East and Southern Africa regions is a step in the right direction.

63. With respect to the corporate innovation agenda, as explained above, over the coming years IFAD will work with its partners to step up efforts to facilitate the delivery of state-of-the-art knowledge in selected challenge areas. IFAD will place more emphasis on learning and knowledge-sharing activities and accord them a value equal to that of the design of new loans and grants. This will require investment in changing the organizational mindset and culture and revisiting current ways of working. For example, IFAD needs to enhance the learning loops by systematically scouting for knowledge emerging from the entire project cycle. The focus of PTA's work needs to be shifted from reviewing the design of new projects to becoming more involved in and facilitating learning on the ground.

64. To conclude, over the last three years, progress made in implementing the knowledge management strategy has been more than satisfactory. The organization has a better understanding of its strengths and is cognizant of the challenges it faces. There is consensus on the view that IFAD's knowledge is one of its most precious assets and must be captured and shared systematically.