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Report of the Chairperson on the eighty-ninth session of the Evaluation Committee

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For: Review

Report of the Chairperson on the eighty-ninth session of the Evaluation Committee

1. This report covers the deliberations of the Evaluation Committee during its eighty-ninth session held on 9 October 2015.
2. The session was attended by Committee members from India (Chair), Egypt, France, Indonesia, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland. China attended as observer. The Committee was joined by the Officer-in-Charge, Programme Management Department (PMD); Senior Portfolio Manager, PMD; Director, Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE); Secretary of IFAD; Deputy Director, IOE; Associate Vice-President, Strategy and Knowledge Department (SKD), Director, Budget and Organizational Development Unit, Director, Asia and Pacific Division, Officer-in-Charge, East and Southern Africa Division and other IFAD staff. In addition, the Committee was joined by Dr Mafizur Rahman, Economic Counsellor and Alternate Permanent Representative of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to IFAD, for the deliberations on the country programme evaluation (CPE) for Bangladesh.

Adoption of the agenda

3. The provisional agenda contained the following items: (i) opening of the session; (ii) adoption of the agenda; (iii) revision to the minutes of the eighty-eighth session of the Evaluation Committee; (iv) results-based work programme and budget for 2016 and indicative plan for 2017-2018 of IOE; (v) country programme evaluation for Bangladesh; (vi) evaluation synthesis on IFAD's engagement with indigenous peoples; (vii) project performance assessment of the Support Project for the Strategic Plan for the Transformation of Agriculture in Rwanda; (viii) provisional agenda of the Evaluation Committee for 2016; and (ix) other business.
4. The Chairperson proposed, in the interest of time, a revision to the order of the agenda items by bringing forward the item on the provisional agenda of the Evaluation Committee for 2016 to become item (v).
5. The provisional agenda was amended to include, under other business: (a) as proposed by the Director, IOE, a joint informal session of the Evaluation Committee and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Programme Committee to discuss the evaluation synthesis report on pastoral development; (b) the Evaluation Committee's reporting mechanism to the Executive Board; and (c) as proposed by Norway, the possibility of holding an informal seminar for the Evaluation Committee and the Performance-based Allocation System (PBAS) working group to discuss IOE's preliminary findings on the PBAS evaluation.
6. The agenda contained in document EC 2015/89/W.P.1, duly amended to reflect the revised order of agenda items and include three additional items under other business (to be issued as EC 2015/88/W.P.1/Rev.1) was adopted by the Committee.

Revision to the minutes of the eighty-eighth session of the Evaluation Committee

7. The revision to the minutes of the eighty-eighth session of the Evaluation Committee was endorsed, with members highlighting the need for the Committee to discuss how the reporting modalities could be further improved.

Results-based work programme and budget for 2016 and the indicative plan for 2017-2018 of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD

8. The Committee welcomed IOE's results-based work programme and budget for 2016 and indicative plan for 2017-2018 as contained in document EC/2015/88/W.P.3 as an excellent document prepared in line with the objectives of the Tenth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources. The Committee noted that the deliberations and comments provided by the Evaluation Committee, the Audit

Committee, and the Executive Board at their previous sessions had been taken into account in finalizing the document. Members also commended the IOE Director for preparing a succinct comparative overview, highlighting the main changes between the current version of the 2016 work programme and budget document as compared to the preview document submitted to the Evaluation Committee in June. They requested IOE to circulate such an overview to the Committee members prior to future sessions.

9. Members also noted the new aspects included in the results-based work programme and budget, including: the vision and mission statement; an additional evaluation synthesis report (ESR) on gender equality to be prepared jointly by the Rome-based agencies (RBAs); and a change in the timelines for reporting on 2015 achievements from end-May to mid-September, and 2015 budget utilization from mid-April to mid-September. It was noted that the new document also used a revised exchange rate of US\$1=EUR 0.87 (up from US\$1=EUR 0.86), and the proposed 2016 budget was currently at US\$5,669,419, reflecting a 6.6 per cent nominal decrease and a 1.4 per cent real increase as compared to the 2015 budget.
 10. Members discussed the changes in financial projections for 2015 budget utilization, and sought clarity on the difference in the real increase versus the nominal decrease in the 2016 budget. IOE indicated that the exchange rate was one factor, and that the drivers of the increase were mainly the additional gender synthesis and the need to include recruitment costs to replace one professional staff member who is to leave IOE in the first quarter of 2016.
 11. The Committee welcomed the effectiveness and accountability indicators included by IOE in the Results Management Framework (RMF), and called upon IOE to also include efficiency indicators therein. In this regard, IOE clarified that the proposed 2016 RMF includes indicators to assess IOE's efficiency but would review them moving forward. The Committee also applauded IOE's proposed initiative to hold a technical seminar on the Second Sustainable Development Goals evaluation in November 2015, and suggested that any major issues needing follow-up be reflected in the workplan for 2017 and thereafter.
 12. In response to a query on the conduct of the planned ESRs, IOE indicated that three reports would be finalized this year, on South-South Cooperation, environment and natural resource management, and smallholder access to markets, with a further three proposed for next year, on policy dialogue, scaling up and the joint exercise on gender. The synthesis on fisheries and aquaculture is currently planned for 2017.
 13. Regarding the reform of the status of consultants at IFAD, the Committee expressed appreciation for the steps taken by Management in establishing the new guidelines for consultants, and requested clarification on how they would affect IFAD's attractiveness and services given its high reliance on consultancy services. Management indicated that the new guidelines and manual did not change the policy with respect to taxation, and that consultants continued to be responsible for paying taxes in their country of residence where required by prevailing legislation.
 14. The Committee approved the IOE results-based work programme and budget document for transmission to the Audit Committee for consideration and to the Executive Board for approval.
- Proposed provisional agenda of the Evaluation Committee for 2016
15. The Committee considered and discussed document EC2015/89/W.P.7, proposed provisional agenda of the Evaluation Committee for 2016, and agreed to shift the November session to June. After consideration of all relevant points, Members requested IOE to present a revised provisional agenda for 2016 at the next Committee session for approval.

- Country programme evaluation for the People's Republic of Bangladesh
16. The Evaluation Committee reviewed the CPE for Bangladesh as contained in document EC 2015/89/W.P.4, and expressed appreciation for the consultative and collaborative team work between IOE and Management. It was noted that this was the third CPE for Bangladesh, and members acknowledged IOE's effort in producing a clear and valuable report.
 17. Members congratulated Management on the highly satisfactory performance ratings for project relevance and alignment with government strategies, portfolio effectiveness and portfolio efficiency, and noted the positive impact of the projects on rural poverty alleviation through increased household incomes, enhanced production and productivity, introduction of new agricultural technology and enhanced access to markets, as well as the strengthened partnership between IFAD and the Government of Bangladesh.
 18. The Committee commended the efforts made to intervene and invest in fragile environmental areas, and the incorporation of environmental protection measures, as well as the investment in rural infrastructure and gender equality, specifically to increase women's access to land; the group-based community development approach; the emphasis on innovation; the assigning of small-scale infrastructure work to labour contracting societies; and work done on microcredit and finance.
 19. The Committee expressed concern on issues such as the need for programme design to take persistent credit gaps into account, keeping a focus on environmental protection and climate change adaptation as a priority in Bangladesh, providing an enabling environment for the private sector, building knowledge management into the country programme, enhancing engagement in high-level policy dialogue, ensuring that nutritional aspects are duly included in investment programmes and strengthening RBA collaboration at country level. The Committee took note of the relevant clarifications made by Management.
 20. In response to members' requests for additional information on the recommendation that the country office be strengthened by outpostting a country programme manager, Management underscored that this issue was being considered from a corporate perspective and in this context, the decentralization strategy was being updated as requested by the Board.
 21. Members urged Management to work closely with the Government of Bangladesh to take corrective action in regard to inadequate maintenance of infrastructure, and to ensure sustainability of benefits. Responding to the question of the wide variation in costs per beneficiary across projects, IOE clarified that for an outlier project, the average per capita cost was still well within the normal range.
 22. The Government of Bangladesh representative attending the meeting expressed the Government's appreciation for the CPE and sought clarification on how beneficiary perspectives were reflected in the evaluation. IOE clarified that the CPEs all include in-depth consultations with beneficiaries and their groups through a variety of data collection instruments such as focus group discussions and site visits.
 23. With regard to the CPE agreement at completion point (ACP), it was noted that some of IOE's recommendations had been presented in the document in a modified form. The Evaluation Committee asked for further clarification on the process for preparing ACPs. Management agreed to reformulate/amend the ACP to retain IOE's recommendations in their original form, and in consultation with the Government of Bangladesh, specify Management's and Government's views thereon.
 24. The Evaluation Committee commended IFAD and the Government of Bangladesh for the strong partnership, and endorsed the evaluation results and recommendations as provided in the CPE document. Management was encouraged to follow up the CPE recommendations in their interventions in Bangladesh.

Evaluation synthesis on IFAD's engagement with indigenous people

25. The Committee considered the evaluation synthesis on IFAD's engagement with indigenous people and welcomed the findings of the synthesis report as reflected in document EC 2015/89/W.P.5.
26. The Committee concurred with the main objectives of the evaluation synthesis, namely, identification of lessons learned and good practices, and recommendations for IFAD's future engagement with indigenous people. Members applauded IFAD Management for the dynamic and pioneering role in bringing development issues around indigenous people to the forefront and consistently incorporating these issues in its strategies and guidelines.
27. The Committee took note of and commended IFAD's policy of "do good" as opposed to the "do no harm" of other international financial institutions (IFIs), the principle of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) to ensure that all concerns of indigenous peoples were taken on board, the fact that the policy was aligned with the United Nations mandate, and the efforts to involve indigenous people in IFAD's institutional platforms and initiatives. In the same vein, members welcomed Management's initiative to develop a "how-to note" on FPIC to ensure effective operationalization.
28. On the question of revisiting the objectives of the Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility (IPAF), Management indicated that the main focus should be on securing stable funding for the engagement with indigenous peoples, which had so far been dependent on grants. The Committee sought to understand what steps IFAD was taking to ensure the sustainability of interventions with indigenous people and emphasized the need to ensure that the good progress made at the global level was replicated at the national level, by linking IPAF and IFAD projects.
29. The Committee supported the findings of the report and requested that IOE provide further information on how IFAD fared against the findings of evaluation studies of other IFIs.
30. Management assured the Committee that efforts were being made to secure stable funding for activities with indigenous people by exploring several options, such as transferring IPAF to indigenous people's organizations themselves for direct resource mobilization, and liaising with like-minded organizations on dedicated funding.

Project performance assessment of the Support Project for the Strategic Plan for the Transformation of Agriculture (PAPSTA) in Rwanda

31. The Committee discussed the project performance assessment of the Support Project for the Strategic Plan for the Transformation of Agriculture (PAPSTA), presented as document EC 2015/88/W.P.6, and noted with appreciation the good work done by IOE in carrying out a candid and balanced evaluation and putting together the document.
32. The Committee commended Management and the country director on the good performance of PAPSTA, and noted the similarity of the PMD and IOE ratings across all criteria, while appreciating the enabling environment provided by the government systems in Rwanda.
33. The Committee also noted the issue of sustainability, especially for small-scale farmers having joined the project during the last year of implementation and cooperatives, as well as the lack of a strong farmers' apex organization and limited private-sector participation.
34. Members further expressed appreciation for the investment made in important areas such as irrigation and gender integration, where other donors were unable to invest, and welcomed the innovations in watershed management, use of new technologies in agriculture and livestock management, community engagement

through creation of local management and supervision committees, and the efficiency gains with the innovative single project implementation unit.

Other business

35. Under other business, following deliberations on the three matters raised, the Committee:
- (a) Welcomed IOE's proposal to hold a joint informal session of the Evaluation Committee and the FAO Programme Committee for knowledge sharing purposes, to review and discuss findings, lessons learned and recommendations from the evaluation synthesis report on pastoral development. The committee agreed to hold the joint informal session on 20 November 2015;
 - (b) Took note of Norway's proposal to hold a joint meeting of the Evaluation Committee and PBAS working group to discuss the preliminary findings of the evaluation on IFAD's PBAS. Taking into account clarifications provided by the Secretary of IFAD on the views expressed by members of the working group at a previous meeting, the Committee agreed to invite the PBAS working group members to the March 2016 session, where the IOE evaluation report on PBAS would be discussed; and
 - (c) Discussed ways to streamline the Committee's reporting procedure, deferring the issue to the next session when the Secretary of IFAD would put forward possible options for consideration.
36. The Chairperson concluded the deliberations and expressed appreciation to IOE, Management, staff, the interpreters and messengers for their help in ensuring the smooth running of the session.