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## Comments of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD on the country strategic opportunities programme for the Republic of the Philippines

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For: Review

# Comments of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD on the country strategic opportunities programme for the Republic of the Philippines

## General comments

1. The Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) undertook a country strategy and programme evaluation (CSPE) for the Republic of the Philippines in 2016, covering partnerships between IFAD and the Government pursued under the country strategies of 1999 and 2009. This was the first CSPE undertaken by IOE in the Republic of the Philippines since the Fund initiated operations in the country in 1978. The agreement at completion point (ACP) for this CSPE was signed in March 2017. In accordance with established practice, the ACP is attached as an appendix to the new country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP) for 2017-2022.
2. The new Philippines COSOP discusses what IFAD could offer to meet the Government's needs. It emphasizes IFAD's potential role in promoting innovative approaches and models to be scaled up by the Government, and in collaborating with other partners, as reflected in the strategic goal of the proposed COSOP "to provide the Government with innovative and scalable pathways for rural poverty reduction".
3. IOE acknowledges that the new Philippines COSOP largely reflects and takes into account the CSPE findings and recommendations, although there are some aspects that could have been given more attention or been more-explicitly reflected in the document. IOE also appreciates the consultative process and preparatory studies involved in the process of preparing the COSOP. Specific comments with reference to the CSPE recommendations are provided in the following section.

## Specific comments

4. CSPE recommendation: carefully reflect on IFAD's comparative advantage in the new country strategy. The new COSOP builds on IFAD's previous experience, its strengths (e.g. gender equality and women's empowerment, engagement with indigenous peoples, social and economic empowerment of poor rural people), and a number of preparatory studies (as indicated in appendix III of the COSOP). However, the description of IFAD's comparative advantage in the document remains rather broad: "... [IFAD's] ability to provide: global knowledge, best practices and innovations for rural transformation and sustained poverty reduction; and solutions for the inclusion of poor and vulnerable rural people in development pathways" (paragraph 18). It does not specify in what areas and how – relative to inclusive and pro-poor rural transformation.
5. Moreover, the CSPE findings presented in the COSOP are primarily focused on positive aspects. The section on lessons would have benefited from more-balanced, comprehensive accounts of the evaluation findings and emerging lessons, for example the need to improve the quality of data and evidence from project monitoring and evaluation, or the lessons learned from engagement with indigenous peoples in different contexts.
6. CSPE recommendation: enhance diagnostic analysis of the potential target group and targeting. The COSOP lists various categories of the target group: poor smallholders, agrarian reform beneficiaries, vulnerable indigenous communities in highland areas, small-scale fishers in coastal municipalities and the rural unemployed (paragraph 32) – also with specific reference to gender/women, youth and indigenous peoples (paragraphs 34-37). Among other points, IOE acknowledges that the COSOP provides a reflection on opportunities to support indigenous peoples relative to the thrust of the strategic objective proposed (i.e. agrifood value chains), recognizing some specificity of indigenous peoples. At

the same time, in general, the document does not clearly convey the importance of a differentiated approach between groups or within each group, even if more-detailed analysis and strategy are expected to follow at a later stage of project design and planning.

7. The new COSOP suggests, in principle, a geographical focus on regions of the Eastern Visayas, Mindanao and the North Luzon highlands. IOE acknowledges that this is in line with the CSPE discussion on the need to increase the intensity of investment in targeted locations for greater likelihood of demonstrable impact.
8. CSPE recommendation: strengthen leverage for policy engagement by improving the quality of knowledge and evidence. IOE appreciates the clear attention in the COSOP to upgrading monitoring, evaluation and analysis to inform policy engagement, and the proposed collaboration with a national partner institution (i.e. the Philippines Institute of Development Studies), largely in line with the CSPE recommendation. As noted in the CSPE and the COSOP, well-performing knowledge management in IFAD's Philippines country programme (including various knowledge-sharing platforms and networking, and good linkages with grants) offers grounds for sharing better-quality evidence and knowledge with the Government and other development partners on key issues in sustainable rural transformation.
9. CSPE recommendation: strengthen partnerships with other development partners. IOE notes the consultation undertaken with multilateral development partners in the COSOP formulation process, but the partners and potential specific areas of collaboration identified appear to be rather limited. The COSOP could have reflected on further opportunities for IFAD to work jointly with other development partners in the rural sector to strengthen exchange of information and knowledge with the Government on key areas, as indicated by the CSPE.
10. The COSOP is rather general in terms of the intention to foster linkages with the private sector. However, IOE acknowledges that a number of private-sector actors were consulted in the process of COSOP formulation (as shown in appendix III). It is expected that concrete opportunities will be pursued relative to selected, specific inclusive value chains in the context of investment projects, rather than at the COSOP stage.

#### Final remarks

11. With the few qualifications noted above, IOE expresses its overall appreciation for the document and the efforts made to follow up on the 2016 CSPE recommendations in line with the ACP.