

Document: EB 2018/125/R.15
Agenda: 4(a)
Date: 28 November 2018
Distribution: Public
Original: English

E



Investing in rural people

Minutes of the 103rd Session of the Evaluation Committee

Note to Executive Board representatives

Focal points:

Technical questions:

Oscar A. Garcia
Director
Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2274
e-mail: o.garcia@ifad.org

Dispatch of documentation:

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

Executive Board — 125th Session
Rome, 12-14 December 2018

For: Information

Minutes of the 103rd Session of the Evaluation Committee

1. The deliberations of the Evaluation Committee at its 103rd session, held on 25 October 2018, are reflected in the present minutes.
2. The minutes will serve as the basis for the oral report provided by the Evaluation Committee Chairperson to the Executive Board. Once they are approved by the Committee, the minutes will be shared with the Board.

Agenda item 1. Opening of the session

3. The session was chaired by the Committee member for Mexico, Mr Benito Santiago Jiménez Sauma, as the Chair of the Evaluation Committee was unable to attend.
4. The session was attended by Committee members for France, India, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Nigeria and Switzerland. Observers were present from Angola, Dominican Republic, Kenya and United Kingdom. The session was also attended by the Director, Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE); Deputy Director, IOE; Associate Vice-President, Programme Management Department; Associate Vice-President, Strategy and Knowledge Department; Director, a.i., Operational Policy and Results Division; Director, East and Southern Africa Division; Director, Sustainable Production, Markets and Institutions Division; Secretary of IFAD; and other IFAD staff.
5. Dr Teresa Tumwet, Agricultural Attaché, Alternate Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kenya to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Agencies in Rome, was present for the discussions on the Impact Evaluation of the Smallholder Horticulture Marketing Programme in the Republic of Kenya. Mr Carlos Alberto Amaral, Minister Counsellor, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Angola to IFAD, was present for the discussions on the Country Strategy and Programme Evaluation for the Republic of Angola.

Agenda item 2. Adoption of the agenda

6. The provisional agenda comprised the following items: (i) Opening of the session; (ii) Adoption of the agenda (iii) Impact Evaluation of the Smallholder Horticulture Marketing Programme in the Republic of Kenya; (iv) Results-based Work Programme and Budget for 2019 and Indicative Plan for 2020-2021 of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD; (v) Provisional Agenda of the Evaluation Committee for 2019; (vi) Country Strategy and Programme Evaluation for the Republic of Angola; (vii) Evaluation Synthesis Report on IFAD's Support to Livelihoods Involving Aquatic Resources from Small-scale Fisheries, Small-scale Aquaculture and Coastal Zones; and (viii) Other business.
7. The Committee adopted the agenda as contained in document EC 2018/103/W.P.1.

Agenda item 3. Impact Evaluation of the Smallholder Horticulture Marketing Programme in the Republic of Kenya

8. The Committee considered the Impact Evaluation of the Smallholder Horticulture Marketing Programme in the Republic of Kenya, as contained in document EC 2018/103/W.P.2/Rev.1 and Management's response thereto, as contained in its addendum.
9. The Committee welcomed the impact evaluation, which had been conducted between 2017 and 2018 using a quasi-experimental method that combined econometric and qualitative techniques in order to help better attribute the effects of the programme on its beneficiaries. Members noted the relevance of the programme's value chain approach to the needs of rural poor smallholders engaged in horticulture production.

10. The Committee welcomed the findings and the recommendations contained in the report, noting the need to: (i) ensure a more integrated approach and proper sequencing of the various building blocks that constitute the value chain; (ii) allocate sufficient time and support for capacity-building to strengthen relationships among value chain actors; (iii) target individual entrepreneurs or small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) for agroprocessing, while positioning smallholder farmers as the suppliers of raw materials; and (iv) establish mechanisms for collaboration among stakeholders for infrastructure-related interventions, to ensure long-term sustainability.
11. The Committee commended IOE for the quality of the report, and welcomed Management's agreement with the findings and recommendations of the evaluation. The Committee also commended the Government of Kenya for its additional financial contribution, indicative of its commitment to the programme, and its support of IOE's findings and recommendations.
12. Management appreciated the collaboration with IOE during the impact evaluation. Management shared the concerns identified in the evaluation and recognized that more efforts should have been made in targeting smallholder farmers and entrepreneurs.
13. In response to members' queries, clarification was provided on the following issues:
 - Late kick-off of monitoring and evaluation (M&E): Management explained that in 2007, when the programme was designed, IFAD was moving towards direct supervision of its programmes, hence the delay in implementing the M&E system. Management further advised that IFAD had taken important steps to strengthen M&E. Among these was the launch and implementation of the Program in Rural M&E (PRiME), which was designed to provide programme staff with training and capacity-building in M&E. Furthermore, IFAD was moving towards a programmatic approach that would enhance follow-up activities and take into consideration lessons learned;
 - Smaller income increases in women-headed households as compared to households headed by men: IOE and Management clarified that women-led households were generally poorer from the outset and lacked the resources available to those headed by men. Special efforts were therefore required to factor in the time and resource constraints faced by women if more homogeneous results were to be achieved;
 - Fostering trust and relationship-building among the beneficiaries: IOE clarified that farmers did form producers' groups in order to share knowledge on farming practices and that these performed well, particularly when there was strong leadership. However, when it came to marketing the produce, the lack of trust among farmers and traders was not conducive to the formation of such groups.
 - The importance of adopting an integrated approach in value chain development and ensuring the proper sequencing of activities: Management recognized the need for thorough analysis of the value chain. A needs analysis would also have been beneficial for the infrastructure component, which had not achieved the desired results. This was due in part to weak ownership and management.
 - Targeting of small enterprises: it was recognized that while SMEs might be the most effective entry points, smallholders should also be supported in making the step change to move towards processing and value addition.

14. In addition, IOE emphasized the importance of taking into consideration the country context and the consequences of the devolution to a county system. IOE also underscored that local ownership of the programme was crucial to its success.
- Agenda item 4. Results-based Work Programme and Budget for 2019 and Indicative Plan for 2020-2021 of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD
15. The Committee considered IOE's results-based work programme and budget for 2019 and indicative plan for 2020-2021, as contained in document EC 2018/103/W.P.3.
16. The Committee noted the key activities that IOE proposed to conduct in 2019. Regarding the country strategy and programme evaluations (CSPEs) to be undertaken, the Committee endorsed Management's proposal to conduct the CSPE for Ecuador instead of El Salvador, given that El Salvador would not be receiving funds during the Eleventh Replenishment of IFAD's Resources period.
17. The Committee welcomed the changes to IOE's results-based work programme and budget for 2019 and indicative plan for 2020-2021, which included clarifications on the increased budget for knowledge-sharing and communication, and a revised learning theme for the 2019 Annual Report on Results and Impact of IFAD Operations, namely "relevance of IFAD project interventions".
18. Nevertheless, members felt that the learning theme of relevance was very broad and requested a narrower focus. IOE explained that the learning theme was selected through a consultative process. The theme of relevance had been identified as it was the criterion that represented the greatest disconnect in ratings between independent and self-evaluations, and was not included in the Results Measurement Framework. In conclusion, IOE agreed to fine-tuning the learning theme for inclusion in the December Board submission, taking into consideration proposals for possible focus areas such as: country context, including government capacity, and the quality and appropriateness of project design to the country context and the provisions to mitigate any associated risks.
19. While supporting the budget and programme of work, the Committee raised some questions that were addressed as follows:
- Regarding the increase in staff costs justified by the need for IOE to absorb unforeseen expenses due to maternity leave and prolonged sick leave, some members observed that an increase in the 2018 IOE budget for a similar amount had already been approved for the same reason. IOE clarified that a bigger "buffer" was necessary and that, in principle, it was of a temporary nature.
 - Members asked why the indicator on knowledge-sharing was limited to the events organized by IOE and did not include those in which IOE participated. IOE clarified that at present only IOE-led events were included but that this indicator could be reviewed once the panel of the external peer review of IFAD's evaluation function had provided their feedback on all indicators;
 - Some members asked for further clarification on the breakdown of the costs related to the two corporate-level evaluations (CLEs) included in the document and on one-time costs or recurrent costs for non-staff. IOE clarified that when evaluations are spread over more than one year, a smaller portion of the budget is dedicated to the finalization of the CLE already under way and the largest part is allocated for the new CLE – in this case – on innovation and productivity increase. Clarifications were also provided with respect to staff and non-staff costs relevant to the external peer review. Management noted that IFAD's Restructuring Policy, to be adopted in 2019, was a key aspect that could be included in the learning theme, and proposed that IOE consider supervision as a future learning theme. IOE clarified that

recent evaluations such as the evaluation synthesis report (ESR) and CLE on IFAD's Supervision and Implementation Support Policy and the CLE on decentralization had already addressed this topic extensively.

20. In conclusion, the Committee expressed appreciation for the clarifications provided and deemed the document reviewed.

Agenda item 5. Provisional Agenda of the Evaluation Committee for 2019

21. The Committee considered the Provisional Agenda of the Evaluation Committee for 2019 as contained in document EC 2018/103/W.P.4. The agenda took into account the Committee's need to consider the main evaluation reports during the year.
22. The Committee confirmed the dates of the four sessions for 2019. Members also noted that efforts would be made in future to ensure a greater balance and more even distribution of the different types of evaluation reports across sessions.

Agenda item 6. Country Strategy and Programme Evaluation for the Republic of Angola

23. The Evaluation Committee considered the CSPE for the Republic of Angola as contained in document EC 2018/103/W.P.5, and commended IOE for the high quality of the report.
24. IOE presented the main findings of all projects reviewed, which were aligned with the Government's and IFAD's priorities. The findings focused on small-scale producers and their need for technical knowledge, physical inputs and financial support to consolidate their food and nutrition security and rebuild their productive and household assets. The evaluation also showed that the farmer field school methodology implemented in Angola had resulted in farmers' empowerment, which in turn had facilitated the dialogue between poor small-scale producers and local institutions; enhanced the production and productivity of crops; strengthened producers' organizations; and built the capacity of institutions and producers. In this regard, members noted the potential to link up with vocational schools and engage with youth to encourage their participation in agriculture. While graduation rates were low, it was clarified that this was mainly due to implementation delays and that training would very likely be carried forward by other programmes of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Bank. Consequently, the graduation rates were expected to increase in the future.
25. Members noted that the projects had paid limited attention to sustainable environmental and natural resource management, and climate change adaptation. The main cause identified was the lack of experienced professionals at the national level in both project management and key technical areas. Water scarcity and soil degradation needed to be addressed and innovations were needed in the areas of aquaculture and fisheries. Furthermore, IFAD needed to strengthen its capacity for implementation support, policy engagement and knowledge management; this was particularly important given the expanded country portfolio and stronger national interest in agricultural and rural development.
26. The Committee appreciated the Management response, in particular its agreement with the findings and recommendations, and welcomed the fact that these had already been addressed in the new country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP) for Angola to be presented to the Executive Board in December. It was also noted that the evaluation highlighted the strong partnerships that IFAD had established in Angola, not only with the Government but also with the World Bank and FAO, especially in the area of farmer field schools. Members also welcomed the proactive and positive response of the Government.
27. The Committee highlighted the need for IFAD to increase its support to women's empowerment, and to focus more on creating sustainable and attractive opportunities in rural areas for women. Management underlined that this aspect was being addressed in the new COSOP. IFAD was also working with the Ministry of

Social Action, Families and Promotion of Women to better understand how to address structural matters such as land tenure that are directly linked to gender parity. Given the challenges linked to water scarcity and soil degradation, the Committee also highlighted the relevance of the recommendation for IFAD to promote agroecological practices through its investment and policy dialogue. In this regard, Management underlined its ongoing work in agroecological zones.

Agenda item 7. Evaluation Synthesis Report on IFAD's Support to Livelihoods Involving Aquatic Resources from Small-scale Fisheries, Small-scale Aquaculture and Coastal Zones

28. Members reviewed the ESR as contained in document EC 2018/103/W.P.6, and congratulated IOE on the quality of the report.
29. The Committee noted that, over 38 years, IFAD investments in aquatic resources represented 8 per cent of the total value of loans and grants. Despite a highly variable performance over time across countries and subsectors, there had been notable successes in terms of impact on poverty and livelihoods. However, the report revealed that aquatic resources were often subsumed under agricultural interventions, thus not receiving sufficient attention.
30. The Committee further noted that the impact of IFAD-supported projects was most notable when IFAD had committed to long-term engagement in fisheries and aquaculture; had supported innovations, policy dialogue and institutional development; and had worked directly at the community level. Also, sustainability would be enhanced by giving more attention to environment and climate change and ensuring local ownership of programmes.
31. Members welcomed IOEs recommendations and asked for clarification on the following matters:
 - The level of demand from governments for IFAD's support in aquatic resources and fisheries: Management clarified that in recent years confidence and interest had increased among Member States in projects focused on the aquaculture sector, which had resulted in bigger investments in the sector;
 - The limited data available to assess IFAD's impact on poverty reduction in the aquatic sector: IOE explained that this was mainly due to limited attention to aquaculture components and underreporting of M&E results. Management recognized these limitations and agreed that more needed to be done to capture the results and impact. This aspect was being addressed in the design of new programmes; and
 - The relevance of IFAD's role in the sector: IOE and Management further clarified that given the high number of rural poor and food-insecure people engaged in small-scale fisheries, IFAD should remain active in this sector but should adopt a more strategic approach. As highlighted in the ESR, the presence of an in-house fisheries expert since 2015 had added value to IFAD's operations, leading to improved project design, a more realistic approach and more thorough analysis of the context. Some members suggested that the aspect of relevance be further discussed at the Executive Board.
32. Members requested clarification on the sustainability of results and on how to ensure that investments did not contribute to over-fishing. Management underlined the importance of building features into the project design to ensure that implementation was carried out in a sustainable manner. This would mean adopting an ecosystem approach that was community-driven and that integrated ecotourism and other environmental aspects as well as fishing.
33. The Committee also requested clarification on gender equality and women's empowerment, and on partnership-building. Management agreed with the

importance of strengthening partnership-building, noting that the new organizational structure and business model would build IFAD's capacity to deliver in this regard. To that end, IFAD was already partnering CGIAR centres (especially WorldFish) and FAO. Regarding gender equality, Management pointed out that fisheries activities were quite gender-specific and that women were typically employed in the post-harvest phase. It was therefore important to ensure that projects covered the entire value chain process.

Agenda item 8. Other business

34. In closing, the Chair invited Committee members to respond to the survey that had been circulated in the context of the external peer review of IFAD's evaluation function. The Chair then thanked participants for their active engagement in the discussions, and the interpreters and all support staff for the successful session.