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Investing in rural people

Minutes of the 104th 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 — 126th Session
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For: Information

Minutes of the 104th Session of the Evaluation Committee

1. The deliberations of the Evaluation Committee at its 104th session, held on 28 March 2019, 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. Having been approved by the Committee, the minutes will be shared with the Board.

Agenda item 1. Opening of the session

3. The session was attended by Committee members for Egypt, France, India, Indonesia (Chair), Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Nigeria and Switzerland. Observers were present from the Dominican Republic. The session was also attended by the Director, Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE); Deputy Director, IOE; Associate Vice-President, Programme Management Department; Director, a.i., Operational Policy and Results Division; Director, East and Southern Africa Division; Director, West and Central Africa Division; Director, Near East, North Africa and Europe Division; Secretary of IFAD; and other IFAD staff.
4. The following delegates represented their governments for the discussions on:
 - Country strategy and programme evaluations (CSPEs):
 - (i) Republic of Tunisia: Ms Kalthoum Hamzaoui, Director General of Multilateral Cooperation at the Ministry of Development, Investment and International Cooperation; Ms Lamia Jemmali, Director at the General Direction for Financing, Investment and Professional Organizations at the Ministry of Agriculture, Hydraulic Resources and Fisheries; and Ms Hanin Ben Jrad Zekri, Minister Plenipotentiary, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Tunisia to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Agencies;
 - (ii) Burkina Faso: Her Excellency Joséphine Ouedraogo-Guissou, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Burkina Faso to IFAD; and Ms Alice Gisèle Sidibe-Anago, Counsellor and Deputy Permanent Representative of Burkina Faso to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Agencies;
 - (iii) Republic of Kenya: Ms Rollex June Chepchirchir Ruto, Second Counsellor, Alternate Permanent Representative, Embassy of the Republic of Kenya; and Dr Teresa Tumwet, Agricultural Attaché, Alternate Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kenya to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Agencies.
 - Joint project performance evaluation (PPE) by the Independent Evaluation Department of the Asian Development Bank (AsDB) and IOE of the Northern Region Sustainable Livelihoods through Livestock Development Project in the Lao People's Democratic Republic:
 - (i) Dr Somphanh Chanphengxay, Director General, Department of Livestock and Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry; and Mr Souphavanh Keovilay, National Project Director of the AsDB-IFAD-funded Northern Smallholder Livestock Commercialization Project, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.
 - PPE of the Project to Support Development in the Menabe and Melaky Regions:
 - (i) Mr Suzelin Ratohiarijaona, Counsellor, Chargé d'affaires ad interim, at the Embassy of the Republic of Madagascar.

Agenda item 2. Adoption of the agenda (EC 2019/104/W.P.1)

5. The provisional agenda comprised the following items: (i) Opening of the session; (ii) Adoption of the agenda; (iii) CSPE for the Republic of Tunisia; (iv) CSPE for Burkina Faso; (v) Joint PPE by the Independent Evaluation Department of AsDB and IOE of the Northern Region Sustainable Livelihoods through Livestock Development Project in the Lao People's Democratic Republic; (vi) CSPE for the Republic of Kenya; (vii) PPE of the Project to Support Development in the Menabe and Melaky Regions in the Republic of Madagascar; and (viii) Other business.
6. The Committee adopted the agenda as contained in document EC 2019/104/W.P.1, with the addition of two items under other business:
 - (i) Review of evaluation products in relation to IFAD planning, proposed by the representative of Switzerland; and
 - (ii) Consultation meetings to discuss country strategic opportunities programmes (COSOPs), CSPEs and progress reports, proposed by the Office of the Secretary.
7. The agenda will be revised as EC 2019/104/W.P.1/Rev.1.
8. The Committee watched a short animated video by IOE highlighting its contribution to the impact evaluation of IFAD's operations.
9. The Chairperson thanked the representative for Japan, Ms Akiko Muto, for her active participation as a member of the Evaluation Committee, and wished her well in her future endeavours as she would be returning to Japan having completed her tour of duty. Ms Akiko Muto expressed her appreciation to the Evaluation Committee, IOE, and Management for the rich experience of representing Japan on the Evaluation Committee.

Agenda item 3. Country strategy and programme evaluation for the Republic of Tunisia (EC 2019/104/W.P.2)

10. The Committee welcomed the CSPE conducted between 2003 and 2018, and noted that project objectives had evolved in line with the country's and IFAD's policies and strategies. In this regard, members noted the shift in project intervention strategies from an integrated, participatory territorial development approach to an agricultural value chain development approach.
11. Members commended IFAD on the positive results, such as the improvement of living conditions in disadvantaged rural areas, and increased agricultural productivity resulting from investment in anti-erosion works, land reclamation and irrigation infrastructure.
12. The Committee highlighted the major issue of insufficient targeting of the poorest and most vulnerable economically active poor, such as youth and women. It requested Management to urgently and concretely respond to the associated recommendation, recalling that similar recommendations had been made in the 2002 evaluation. A member pointed out that in the light of the ageing rural population in Tunisia, there was a need to find ways to include the elderly in planned interventions.
13. Noting that the introduction of a new agricultural policy would not suffice to solve the targeting-related problem, members emphasized the need to implement adequate targeting policies and monitoring systems to ensure that IFAD resources benefited the poorest, as per its core mandate. Management recognized the importance of the discussion on targeting, and noted that the revised targeting guidelines to be submitted to the Board in September 2019 would be instrumental in addressing this matter.
14. The Committee welcomed the proposal to undertake a poverty-mapping exercise as a means to ensure better targeting. It noted Management's interest in utilizing the

South-South and Triangular Cooperation mechanism to learn from the experience of Mexico, in addition to what was being adapted from Morocco's policy for reducing regional disparities.

15. Members commented on the need for enhanced focus on capacity-building for farmers' organizations. Management noted that such organizations were registered and legally recognized entities in Tunisia. The main challenge was that farmers' organizations were established to manage public goods, and were not allowed to engage in income-generating activities.
16. Members welcomed the fact that both the Government of Tunisia and IFAD Management agreed with the findings and recommendations of the CSPE, and that these would be incorporated into the new COSOP.
17. Members highlighted the importance of the recommendation regarding adapting project architecture and institutional arrangements to the context of Tunisia's decentralization, and noted that this would be reflected in the new COSOP, to ensure that IFAD interventions remained relevant.
18. The Government representatives thanked IOE for the evaluation and confirmed that the findings and recommendations would inform the country strategic planning exercise starting in 2019, and would help the Government ensure alignment of projects with their policies and development strategy.

Agenda item 4. country strategy and programme evaluation for Burkina Faso (EC 2019/104/W.P.3)

19. The Committee welcomed the first CSPE for Burkina Faso, covering the period from 2007 to 2017, and thanked IOE for a well-written report. The Committee noted that the Government of Burkina Faso and Management agreed with the evaluation findings and recommendations, and that these had already been incorporated into the new COSOP.
20. Members appreciated the positive findings reflected in the evaluation report, which underlined that IFAD-funded projects followed coherent approaches that had a positive impact on the income and food security of rural households; provided strong support to farmers' organizations in the country; and led to increased agricultural production and improved natural resources management.
21. The Committee noted the need for the IFAD portfolio to: (i) facilitate secure access for smallholder farmers to land and to establish mechanisms for easy and sustainable access to microfinance; (ii) pay adequate attention to forest and pastures management, in addition to the existing focus on cultivated lands and better rainfall management; (iii) strengthen the climate change focus in interventions for sustainable management of crop production; and (iv) ensure a systematic uptake of lessons learned from interventions in the agricultural sector.
22. Furthermore, the Committee noted that IFAD interventions should not be too geographically dispersed, as this could jeopardize increases in impact and sustainability. Management stated that IFAD operations were limited to about six regions, as agreed with the Government.
23. While Burkina Faso was not on the list of countries with fragile situations, the Committee pointed out that it was important to find ways to focus on the pastoral communities most at risk to ensure that they benefited from IFAD interventions. In this regard, members urged IFAD to use policy dialogue to support the Government in the efforts to address land tenure measures and operationalize land tenure laws, given that lack of secure land tenure was one of the root causes of fragility. Management underlined that fragility was now an integral part of interventions: for example, the newly developed citizen engagement tool was designed to engage beneficiaries in programme development.

24. A member commended the Government of Burkina Faso and IFAD for the increased production of millet and sorghum resulting from land rehabilitation techniques that had made more quality land available for production.
25. Regarding the technical partnership with the Rome-based agencies, Management informed the Committee that a joint action plan for the Sahel with the World Food Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations was under preparation. IFAD was also in the process of developing its own strategy for the Sahel with an emphasis on partnerships.
26. Management further highlighted its plan to harmonize practices for agricultural credit in close collaboration with the Government to facilitate sustainable access for smallholders to credit and other financial services.
27. The Government representative welcomed the evaluation, and considered it an important exercise in identifying what steps needed to be taken in the fight against poverty, specifically in targeting the most vulnerable people.

Agenda item 5. Joint project performance evaluation by the Independent Evaluation Department of the Asian Development Bank and the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD of the Northern Region Sustainable Livelihoods through Livestock Development Project in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (EC 2019/104/W.P.4)

28. The Committee considered the PPE, the first joint evaluation carried out with AsDB, covering the period from 2007 to 2015. The joint evaluation was deemed appropriate given that the project was cofinanced by AsDB and IFAD. It addressed the Government's request for support to develop evaluation capacity, and its findings would guide the implementation of the follow-on project, the Northern Smallholder Livestock Commercialization Project: Rural Financial Services Programme, approved in 2016.
29. Members welcomed the high level of collaboration between IFAD and AsDB in conducting the evaluation, and encouraged IOE to undertake further joint evaluations and joint work on the ground with other partners and cofinanciers.
30. The Committee noted some factors that had affected the effectiveness of the project, such as the remoteness of the project areas and the complexity of the targeting; challenging implementation conditions given the coverage of 5 provinces and 400 villages; the language barrier; and lack of motivation among some beneficiaries.
31. Noting the importance of considering the needs and level of motivation of beneficiaries in designing projects, members supported the recommendation for a more explicit and tailored targeting approach, and welcomed the view shared by Management and IOE that a more sophisticated targeting approach was needed. Tailored interventions and embedding lessons learned in future initiatives would address flaws in project design, such as the microfinance component which had proved inflexible. Management was working closely with the Government to establish a more customized targeting approach in support of livestock commercialization.
32. Regarding the follow-on project being cofinanced by IFAD and AsDB, the Committee reiterated the importance of targeting poor but motivated rural farmers, and enhancing their capacity to fully benefit from available market opportunities both within and outside of the country. In this regard, the Committee requested that IFAD and the Government discuss ways through which both the central and province authorities could work together to ensure that foreign livestock producers would not endanger domestic small-scale farmers' access to the meat market.
33. The Committee welcomed Management and the Government's positive uptake of the findings and recommendations, most of which had been incorporated into the

design of the follow-on project. The Committee noted that the recommendations and lessons learned would inform the design of similar interventions in other contexts.

34. Management pointed out the importance of considering the overall institutional effectiveness of cofinancing in future joint evaluations, in addition to evaluating a specific project, in order to strengthen institutional partnerships.
Agenda item 6. Country strategy and programme evaluation for the Republic of Kenya (EC 2019/104/W.P.5. + Add.1)
35. The Committee welcomed the second CSPE for Kenya and thanked IOE for a good report. The evaluation results showed that there had been positive economic changes such as increased productivity and higher incomes, improved food security, successful promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, innovative solutions to credit delivery and good alignment with government strategies.
36. The Committee noted the need for improvements in areas such as: (i) adapting to the decentralized government system; (ii) linking producers with the processing and marketing aspects of the value chain; (iii) achieving synergies between rural finance and value chain projects; and (iv) targeting youth. Regarding the latter, Management was encouraged to actively follow-up on the IFAD Rural Youth Action Plan 2019-2021 approved by the Board in December 2018. The Committee also urged Management to ensure that the new COSOP and interventions were well-aligned with the ongoing institutional reforms in Kenya, as well as other issues such as land reform.
37. A member welcomed the focus on market-led and value chain approaches, youth and climate change, and the involvement in the dairy, horticulture and aquaculture sectors, as these had the potential for increased impact in future programmes.
38. While noting the relevance of thematic focus and targeting, members highlighted the need to pay special attention to non-lending activities, such as private sector engagement, in line with the Government's priorities. Management indicated that IFAD's enhanced capacity as a result of decentralization would be helpful in this regard.
39. In response to a query about why it had taken IFAD so long to adapt to the devolution process, IOE explained that this was mainly due to limited in-country capacity. With the strengthening of the regional hub in Nairobi, IFAD had acquired the requisite capacity to respond to changes in the country context. The strengthened regional hub also provided an opportunity for IFAD to be more actively engaged in non-lending activities, such as knowledge management and building partnerships.
40. IOE reiterated the importance of focusing on priority interventions in which IFAD had the comparative advantage in the agricultural sector.
41. The Committee appreciated the proactive role of the Kenyan Government in ensuring project effectiveness. The Government representative thanked IOE for the evaluation report and expressed Kenya's readiness to work with IFAD in aligning interventions with the decentralized structures at county level.
42. Both the Government and Management agreed with the findings and recommendations, which were already being incorporated into the new COSOP.
43. Management also thanked IOE for a good and highly participatory CSPE process which had actively involved government, civil society organizations and other stakeholders.

Agenda item 7. Project performance evaluation of the Project to Support Development in the Menabe and Melaky Regions in the Republic of Madagascar (EC 2019/104/W.P.6)

44. The Committee welcomed the PPE and its relevance to the Government's land-titling reform of 2004, the development of small-scale irrigation systems and the positive project outcomes achieved, despite the political crisis between 2009 and 2013.
45. The Committee appreciated IOE's findings and recommendations regarding the project design; combining land tenure security with agricultural development; proper planning for scaling up; and the need to promote environmental health and sanitation.
46. Regarding the sustainability of the project's positive outcomes, such as land certification, the Committee noted that the activity would continue, but at a slower rate due to limited resources.
47. Members welcomed the good practice of rice intensification and noted that Madagascar would benefit from mechanization of rice transplantation.
48. Management and the Government expressed their agreement with the recommendations; in particular, Management highlighted the strong alignment between the evaluation findings and the findings in the project completion report.
49. Regarding the issue of sanitation and health, the Government representative agreed that this had been a problem in the first phase and that it would be specifically addressed in the next phase, together with other lessons learned such as ensuring sustainability by strengthening grass-roots organizations and other institutions.

Agenda item 8. Other business

(a) Review of evaluation products in relation to IFAD planning

50. The representative of Switzerland, supported by the Committee, noted that the current planning and sequencing of discussions of IOE evaluation products needed to be revisited, in order to better inform the development of new COSOPs and projects by Management. Recalling that IOE reports directly to the Board through the Evaluation Committee, members expressed concern that their feedback on evaluation products came too late to inform follow-on design of interventions by Management. Members stressed the importance of being able to discuss IOE products in a timely manner so that that the Committee's feedback and that of the Board could better inform action and follow-up by Management.
51. IOE explained that a diversified mix of evaluation products was brought to each Evaluation Committee session, as per the IFAD Evaluation Policy. IOE further noted that the lessons from each evaluation product were intended for use not only in the country targeted by a specific evaluation but also in developing interventions in other countries with a similar context.
52. Both IOE and Management agreed on the importance of better timing and sequencing of the Committee's discussions and the need to find ways to achieve this without delaying operations in the field. Management mentioned that the issues of timing and flexibility could also be discussed in the context of the ongoing peer review exercise.
53. Members were assured that Management and IOE worked in close collaboration during evaluation exercises, and that ongoing project design was informed by ongoing and iterative dialogue at both country and corporate level to ensure relevance.

54. Given that the issue of how the Evaluation Committee functions and how this could be recalibrated fell within the purview of governance, the Secretary noted that these issues could be discussed at the Board retreat.
- (b) Consultation meetings to discuss COSOPs, CSPEs and progress reports
55. The Secretary of IFAD reminded participants of the schedule for the Consultation on COSOPs (and related CSPEs) which would be held on 29 March at IFAD headquarters. The consultation was being introduced on a pilot basis to lighten the Board's agenda and enhance time management during the session, as discussed with the Convenors and Friends.
56. Following the COSOP consultation, an informal seminar on streamlining the approval of IFAD-funded projects and programmes would be held. This item had been scheduled for discussion at the 125th session of the Board, but had been postponed to allow more time for consultations with members. Feedback on the paper would be shared with the Board for approval.¹

Closing

57. The Chair thanked participants for their active engagement in the discussions, and the interpreters and all support staff for their work.

¹ Following the informal seminar held on 29 March, it was agreed that the paper would be submitted for Board approval in May and not through a vote by correspondence.