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Investing in rural people

Minutes of the 113th Session of the Evaluation Committee

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Executive Board — 133rd Session
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For: **Information**

Minutes of the 113th Session of the Evaluation Committee

1. The deliberations of the Evaluation Committee at its 113th session held virtually on 30 June 2021 are reflected in the present minutes.
2. Once approved by the Committee, the minutes will be shared with the Executive Board.

Agenda item 1: Opening of the session

3. The session was attended by Committee members for Cameroon, France, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands and Nigeria. Observers were present from Austria, Canada, China and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. 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, Operational Policy and Results Division; Director, Research and Impact Assessment Division; Secretary of IFAD; and other IFAD staff.
4. The Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, His Excellency Jauhar Saleem and Mr Salman Pervaiz, Third Secretary and Alternate Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, participated in the Committee's deliberations on the country strategy and programme evaluation (CSPE) for Pakistan. Ms Habsatou Hassane Moussa, Second Counsellor and Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Niger, participated in the Committee's deliberations on the CSPE for Niger. Ms Houda Ayouch, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco; Ms Ilham Teto, Alternate Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco; Mr Said Laith, Director of the Rural Area and Mountain Zones Development Directorate (DDERZM), within the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Rural Development, Water and Forests; and Mr Mohammed El Moatamid, DDERZM Division Head, participated in the Committee's deliberations on the CSPE for Morocco. Their presence ensured that the deliberations benefited from the governments' perspective on the respective evaluations.
5. The Secretary of IFAD opened the meeting, which began with a moment dedicated to the memory of Mr George Lantu, Deputy Permanent Representative for the Republic of Indonesia to IFAD, and Chair of the Evaluation Committee until April 2021, who had recently passed away.
6. The Secretary welcomed Ireland and Luxembourg as new members of the Evaluation Committee following their nomination at the last session of the Executive Board in April, and Mr Caka Alverdi Awal as new Committee member for Indonesia.

Agenda item 2: Election of the Chairperson of the Evaluation Committee (EC 2021/113/W.P.2)

7. The following nominations for the Chair of the Evaluation Committee were received:
 - (i) Cameroon for the period from May 2021 to April 2023, to be followed by Egypt for the period from May 2023 to April 2024;
 - (ii) India; and
 - (iii) Indonesia.
8. In the absence of a consensus among the lists of Member States on a single candidate to be nominated as Chairperson of the Evaluation Committee, the election of the Chairperson was postponed to the next session of the Committee to be held in September. Members agreed to nominate Mexico as temporary Chairperson to preside over the proceedings of the 113th session of the Committee.

Nominees were invited to provide their bios/CVs to be shared with Committee members to facilitate decision-making. The Office of the Secretary, in consultation with the Office of the General Counsel, will clarify the procedures to be followed with respect to the election of the Chairperson should a consensus not be reached.

Agenda item 3: Adoption of the agenda (EC 2021/113/W.P.1)

9. The Committee adopted the agenda as contained in document EC 2021/113/W.P.1/Rev.1.

Agenda item 4: Country strategy and programme evaluation for the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (EC 2021/113/W.P.3)

Key messages:

- The Committee welcomed the positive results achieved by IFAD’s strategy in Pakistan, particularly its focus on poverty alleviation, access to basic services and improved livelihoods and its alignment with the national development strategy. The Committee noted with interest the comments delivered on behalf of the Government of Pakistan and looked forward to the early finalization and signing of the agreement at completion point.
- The new country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP), now under design, should take into account the recommendations of the CSPE. The Committee looked forward to the signature of the host country agreement formalizing the IFAD country director’s presence in the country.
- In line with the CSPE, members recommended that greater attention be paid to strategic approaches to leverage systemic and sustainable changes, innovations and scaling up. The adoption of a food systems approach would also facilitate an increased focus on gender transformative interventions, nutrition, natural resource management and adaptation to climate change.

10. The Evaluation Committee welcomed this third CSPE for the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, covering the period from 2009 to 2020, as contained in document EC 2021/113/W.P.3, and took note of the statement delivered on behalf of the Government of Pakistan by His Excellency, Ambassador Jauhar Saleem.
11. The Committee appreciated the findings that the IFAD country programme was well aligned with the Government’s development strategies, had a strong poverty focus, generated positive outcomes in terms of enhanced livelihoods, access to basic services and improved living conditions for beneficiaries, proactive and flexible approaches to portfolio management, and important contributions to women’s social and economic empowerment.
12. Members also noted the need to strengthen IFAD’s future intervention on women’s empowerment, land tenure, climate change adaptation and mitigation and improving nutrition. A food systems lens could also be integrated to fine-tune targeting and facilitate the response on nutrition and food security. The Committee also highlighted the need to strengthen in-country presence with the upcoming signing of the host country agreement. Finally, the Committee encouraged Management to explore opportunities for innovation and scaling up of the current successful interventions in Pakistan.
13. Management agreed with the evaluation’s findings and recommendations, confirming that they would be embedded in the design of the new COSOP, noting that the cross-cutting themes of gender, nutrition and climate change had been mainstreamed under the Eleventh Replenishment of IFAD’s Resources (IFAD11) and embedded in the design of the latest generation of projects, although less so in the generation of projects evaluated in this particular CSPE.

Agenda item 5: Country strategy and programme evaluation for the Republic of Niger (EC 2021/113/W.P.4)

Key messages:

- The Evaluation Committee welcomed the positive results achieved by the IFAD country programme in Niger, in particular in the areas of natural resource management, land rehabilitation and innovation, and supported the recommendations made in the CSPE. Members also noted that the design of the new COSOP would take into account the findings of this evaluation.
- Members identified room for improvement on programme relevance, efficiency and effectiveness, and recommended an increased focus on improving gender equity and empowerment and nutrition outcomes. Emphasis should also be placed on promoting rural enterprises, balancing larger-scale infrastructure interventions while ensuring availability of basic infrastructure and monitoring the cost-effectiveness of investments in market access infrastructure.
- The Committee also underscored that IFAD's activities in the country must take into account a conflict management perspective where needed.

14. The Evaluation Committee welcomed this second CSPE for the Republic of Niger covering the period from 2011 to 2020, as contained in document EC 2021/113/W.P.4.
15. Members welcomed the statement delivered on behalf of the Government of Niger by Ms Habsatou Hassane Moussa, Second Counsellor and Deputy Permanent Representative.
16. The Committee welcomed the achievements made by the IFAD country programme in Niger in support of innovation, and in particular the performance on natural resource management, especially soil and water conservation, land restoration and access to small-scale irrigation, and the efforts on climate change adaptation. Members underlined the good collaboration among the Rome-based agencies, although they noted a lack of coordination with the broader United Nations family.
17. Members' observations for improvements related to the need to: (i) rebalance the country programme focus and investments towards basic needs and infrastructure and simple income-generating activities for people with limited access to land, including women; (ii) strengthen activities to promote women's empowerment; (iii) ensure that approaches to support farmers' access to markets are more cost-effective; (iv) strengthen IFAD human resources to engage in policy dialogue; and (v) strengthen in-country presence, with the country director to be based in Niamey.
18. Another key element highlighted by Committee members was the need to include the conflict management perspective in IFAD's interventions to constantly reinforce the conflict sensitivity of investments, in recognition of the increased fragility of the country context.
19. Management acknowledged the overall positive feedback from Committee members, given the challenging context, and confirmed that priority had been given to improving production and productivity, and to meeting basic household needs in terms of food security and income generation before moving to a more sophisticated integrated approach in terms of marketing, infrastructure and rural enterprise. As such, the pro-poor focus of the programme was very much intact. Management concurred with members on the need to place a stronger emphasis on women's empowerment, youth and nutrition. They also agreed that the country programme would benefit from the presence of the country director, which would facilitate policy engagement, a key element in addressing the social and cultural

norms that represent obstacles to the long-term and sustainable empowerment of women and youth.

20. Management confirmed that the agreement at completion point for the Niger CSPE had just been signed by the Government and had been transmitted to IFAD for countersignature. In this regard, Management suggested that a strategic discussion take place on relevance, based on comments provided by the external peer review.
21. Finally, IOE informed the Committee that an advisory panel of five well-known international evaluation specialists had been established to support the Director, IOE in ensuring high quality evaluation standards and methodology.

Agenda item 6: Country strategy and programme evaluation for the Kingdom of Morocco (EC 2021/113/W.P.5 + Add. 1)

Key messages:

- The Evaluation Committee welcomed the positive results achieved by IFAD in Morocco, and agreed with the CSPE recommendations, encouraging Management to take them into account in the design of the new COSOP.
- Members were pleased with the level of cooperation achieved between Morocco and IFAD, and noted that the cooperation with other multilateral institutions could improve, while rural finance could benefit from the development of stronger partnerships with existing financial institutions.
- Members also underlined the importance of balancing technical innovation with the development of downstream value chains, suggested expanding opportunities for South-South and Triangular Cooperation and highlighted the importance of improving the sustainability of benefits.

22. The Evaluation Committee welcomed this second CSPE for the Kingdom of Morocco covering the period from 2008 to 2020, as contained in document EC 2021/113/W.P.5, together with the agreement at completion point signed by the Government and IFAD Management, as contained in its addendum.
23. Members welcomed the statement delivered on behalf of the Government of Morocco by Mr Said Laith, Director, DDERZM, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Rural Development, Water and Forests.
24. Committee members welcomed the positive results achieved by the collaboration between Morocco and IFAD, and underlined how it set a very good example of how IFAD's action, when consistent with a clear national strategy, can deliver a significant contribution to the achievement of national development goals such as those set in the Green Morocco Plan and Green Generation Strategy for the period 2008-2020.
25. Members noted that, overall, the portfolio in Morocco favoured technical innovation and thus upstream value chain development, with downstream value chain development being a potential area for improvement, in particular regarding IFAD's support to strengthening grassroots organizations, learning from other country programmes and leveraging South-South and Triangular Cooperation.
26. Management confirmed that the design of the new COSOP was well advanced, with a number of CSPE recommendations already factored in. Management agreed that further efforts would be made to realize the full potential of value chain development by pursuing diverse partnerships, engaging with the private sector and bolstering producer organizations to ensure greater sustainability and long-term benefits.
27. In response to members' queries regarding limited collaboration with other multilateral organizations, both IOE and Management confirmed that this was in part due to the geographic area covered by IFAD interventions, which, being

remote mountainous areas, were very challenging and not widely prioritized by such organizations.

Agenda item 7: Proposed dates for sessions of the Evaluation Committee in 2022 (EC 2021/113/W.P.6)

28. The Committee approved the proposed dates for the sessions of the Evaluation Committee in 2022, as contained in document EC 2021/113/W.P.6, namely:
- 116th session Thursday, 17 March 2022
 - 117th session Tuesday, 7 June 2022
 - 118th session Friday, 2 September 2022
 - 119th session Friday, 14 October 2022

Agenda item 8: Oral update on the review of annex I of the Revised IFAD Evaluation Policy

29. As requested by the Executive Board at its 132nd session in April 2021, IOE had reviewed the practices of independent evaluation offices in other international financial institutions (IFIs) on the selection and appointment of the head of the evaluation function, compared to those of IFAD. The benchmarking exercise confirmed that the IFAD Evaluation Policy is the most detailed in this sense and that, in all the organizations surveyed, the evaluation director is appointed by the Executive Board.
30. On the differences between IFAD and other IFIs regarding the composition of the selection panel, IOE explained that in other IFIs the panel includes selected members of the Evaluation Committee. Moreover, gender balance in the selection panel is not a formal requirement in any other IFI, and is not explicitly requested in any evaluation policy examined. On the role of the president, in all other IFIs the president has a consultative role regarding the appointment of the head of evaluation. At IFAD, the revised IFAD Evaluation Policy specifies that the President is consulted twice, once by the chair of the selection panel and then by the Executive Board at the time of the meeting for the formal appointment.
31. Committee members concurred that the process for the selection and appointment of the Director, IOE at IFAD, as provided in annex I of the revised IFAD Evaluation Policy, was very robust and well detailed. Members requested IOE to share their presentation with the Committee, and agreed to include the discussion on annex I in the agenda for the next session of the Evaluation Committee, with a view to formalizing and concluding the discussion on the annex. Once finalized, the revised annex would be submitted to the Executive Board for consideration and, if approved, would form an integral part of the IFAD Evaluation Policy.

Agenda item 9: Other business

32. Some members sought clarifications on the IOE survey sent to country representatives, which included questions not in the purview of the Committee, such as details on project performance. It was agreed that members would indicate the appropriate persons to be contacted by IOE to fill in the survey.

Closure of the session

33. The Secretary of IFAD reiterated that the Office of the Secretary would issue a communication with regards to the election of the Chairperson of the Evaluation Committee to clarify the procedures, and would circulate any nominees' bios/CVs received.
34. Noting that this was the last Evaluation Committee session attended by the Committee member for Mexico, both members and Management expressed their warm appreciation for his invaluable contribution to the work of the Committee, and for having accepted the role of temporary Chairperson for this session.