
Report on operational items discussed at the Executive Board consultation

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I. Introduction

1. On Wednesday, 22 November, the Executive Board met virtually for a consultation on country strategic opportunities programmes (COSOPs) submitted for the Board's online review, and projects and programmes submitted for approval by the Board at its 140th session to be held in December. The consultation was held to enable the Member States to engage in an in-depth discussion prior to the formal decision-making process. In accordance with the review of modalities of formal and informal sessions of the Executive Board and its subsidiary bodies that is currently being piloted, the projects and programmes that were discussed at the consultation will be put forth for approval by the Board by the batch procedure at the start of the session, following the adoption of the agenda. The consultation complements the individual written comments shared by Members with country teams, to which country teams provide written responses.
2. The items discussed included five investment projects, from the Central African Republic, El Salvador, India, Mozambique and Somalia; and two COSOPs, from El Salvador and Ethiopia. The project for Malawi, the Sustainable Agriculture Production Programme – Phase II (SAPP II), which had initially been included in the consultation agenda, will instead be discussed at the 140th session of the Executive Board. This is the first project in the region to blend technical assistance from both the Global Centre on Adaptation and the Adaptation Fund. An additional climate adaptation study was required, which had delayed its submission to the consultation.
3. In attendance at the session were representatives from 13 Member States on the Executive Board¹ and from another six Member States, including those with an item in the agenda, namely the Central African Republic, El Salvador, Ethiopia, India, Mozambique and Somalia. The delegates took the floor in support of items being presented from their respective countries.
4. The consultation was chaired by the Associate Vice-President, Programme Management Department and attended by the Associate Vice-President, Strategy and Knowledge Department, Directors of the relevant divisions, country directors, project technical leads, the Secretary of IFAD and other IFAD staff. It was held in two half-day segments.
5. Overall, representatives were supportive of the COSOPs and the projects, and few issues were raised during the consultation. The Chair noted, and the Member States echoed, the significance of the new project being presented for Somalia. In the past decade or so, IFAD had supported agricultural development in Somalia only through small grants. In February 2023, Somalia's debt arrears to IFAD were cleared, providing the country access to core IFAD resources. IFAD immediately committed resources to the Rural Livelihoods Resilience Programme (RLRP), which will mark a strategic return to investing in Somalia after about 30 years.
6. Some key cross-cutting themes raised by Member States during the consultation were:
 - Disaster risk reduction. Member States asked for clarification on features included in project designs that mainstream risk and disaster planning and management in the long run. Management clarified that with the introduction of the enhanced Social, Environmental and Climate Assessment Procedures

¹ Executive Board representatives were present from Angola, Argentina, Canada, China, Dominican Republic, France, India, Mexico, Kingdom of the Netherlands, Nigeria, Switzerland, United Kingdom and Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

(SECAP), project designs go beyond avoiding risks and impacts to identify opportunities for maximizing development gains by mainstreaming environmental, social and climate issues throughout the project cycle. All projects also include, as a requirement at design, an Environmental, Social and Climate Management Framework and plan. Therefore, all project designs inherently have a thorough assessment and plan for climate risks and disasters.

- Mainstreaming nutrition. Member States asked for clarification on how nutrition was being mainstreamed in IFAD projects. Management explained that IFAD was working on both behavioural change and increasing access to nutritious food for households participating in the projects. The nexus between nutrition and gender equality was also highlighted, noting that many of the women's empowerment pathways were linked to promotion of nutrition sensitive livelihoods, such as investment in small ruminants, and activities like home gardening, which had the dual purpose of increasing women's livelihoods while at the same time promoting access to more nutritious food.
- Agroecology. Member States raised the question of whether mainstreaming good agroecological practices is systematically done in IFAD-supported projects. Management responded that IFAD is increasingly mainstreaming the principles of agroecology in its projects as an innovative approach to support a transition to sustainable production and food systems. In this regard, IFAD is looking at building on the 10 key principles of agroecology as an integrated approach to production and social cohesion.

II. Summary of proposals and discussions

A. Asia and the Pacific Region

India: Odisha Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups Empowerment and Livelihoods Improvement Programme II (EB 2023/140/R.2)

7. The Odisha Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups Empowerment and Livelihoods Improvement Programme II (OPELIP II) design had been based on the experience and lessons of the first phase in order to consolidate achievements and increase outreach to 1,138 more villages in remote tribal areas of Odisha. Member States were supportive of the proposed investment, highlighting opportunities to strengthen the project's linkages with the State of Odisha's Disaster Risk Reduction Framework. Member States enquired about the approach to nutrition; Management explained that it relies on nutrition education, including through the establishment of combined community crèches and nutrition centres, in addition to the availability of nutritious foods, nutrition sensitive agriculture, including home gardens, and access to nutritious foods through increased incomes. OPELIP II will continue to contribute to the work of the Odisha Millet Mission on promoting production, value addition and consumption of millets at scale. Members asked for further information on activities involving non-timber forest products (NTFP), and Management explained that it is important to recognize the role of NTFP such as nuts, berries, snails and mushrooms for nutrition and income generation in tribal communities.

B. Near East, North Africa and Europe

Somalia: Rural Livelihoods Resilience Programme (EB 2023/140/R.6)

8. The programme aims at sustainably increasing productivity, incomes and nutrition security and enhancing the resilience of rural smallholder families in Somalia. Member States welcomed the programme as an indication of IFAD's longer term investment in the country. Member States enquired about the livelihoods pathways for women, to which Management responded that pathways envisaged in the project are through existing community groups such as village savings and loan groups that are predominantly women constituted. The RLRP will ensure that,

through the community development approach, women will take leadership roles and articulate their needs. Women will participate in activities and interventions such as capacity-building on financial literacy, organizational skills, entrepreneurship, and crop and livestock production. Financial linkages within the programme will prioritize women's and youth groups. Nutrition activities proposed in the programme will also offer opportunities for women's livelihoods. At the same time the programme is proactive in tackling key issues such as land and water access for women and youth.

C. West and Central Africa

Central African Republic: Livestock and Youth Support Project (EB 2023/140/R.7)

9. This IFAD-funded project aims to improve livelihoods and promote the economic and climate resilience, as well as the food and nutritional security, of target groups. To this end, it intends to promote entrepreneurial opportunities for women and young people in the livestock sectors. Given the limited institutional capacities in the country, the implementation of the project will involve national and international NGOs and farmers' organizations with a good knowledge of the country context. Overall, Executive Board representatives were supportive of the project and appreciated the project's commitment to targeting and empowering young people and women. Member States invited the country team to reach out to bilateral partners in Bangui to discuss how to further enhance partnership, collaboration and coordination on the ground in the livestock subsector, as many of the Member States were supporting ongoing initiatives in this regard. Management assured them that the suggestion would be taken on board immediately, especially in view of the upcoming mission to the country in the week of 27 November.

D. East and Southern Africa

Ethiopia: Country strategic opportunities programme (EB 2023/OR/12)

10. The COSOP for Ethiopia was endorsed by the Member States. Delegates appreciated the inclusion of a focus on food systems pathways and post-harvest activities. The Member States questioned the lack of a fuller account of agroecology as an intervention strategy in the COSOP and asked how the humanitarian-development-peace nexus was to be implemented. Management responded that IFAD interventions in Ethiopia already include agroecology activities with the promotion of organic fertilizers and integrated pest management as practised in the ongoing small-scale irrigation programme and as included in the new IFAD-financed agriculture transformation programme. Management also highlighted that the humanitarian-development-peace nexus is an area that is being developed in Ethiopia through the development partners group and will entail the possibility of joint programming by humanitarian and development actors. The developing partnership between the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, World Food Programme and IFAD will lead to joint programming in selected food insecure areas of the country, thus advancing the humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach.

Mozambique: Artisanal Fisheries Resilient Development Project (EB 2023/140/R.4)

11. The project aims to promote the development potential of fisheries, a key sector in the economy with high growth potential. It addresses the key challenges for the artisanal fisheries sector and will integrate existing community structures and technology, promoting climate smart and sustainable practices. Member States expressed support for the project. The main issues flagged for discussion were around the need to strengthen the risk section of the proposal by reinforcing mitigation actions against security risks in northern Mozambique; risks to the

project due to vulnerability to climate change and low levels of adaptation; and the need to reinforce the gender section with a more robust gender analysis, particularly related to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA). Management clarified that the situation in northern Mozambique is evolving, but highlighted that the design process was informed by a conflict assessment, which had identified the main interventions that the project will prioritize involving youth, to contribute to restoring livelihoods in the region. Management also highlighted the project's climate risk mitigation measures, including partnership with the National Meteorology Institute to provide weather and climate information to the project beneficiaries, and the establishment and strengthening of local disaster risk reduction and adaptation groups. On gender, Management clarified that the project had been designed as gender-transformative, with interventions including promotion of the Gender Action Learning System. Management clarified that PSEA aspects are part of the government policies and collaboration agreements with stakeholders.

E. Latin America and the Caribbean

El Salvador: Country strategic opportunities programme (EB 2023/OR/8)

12. The COSOP for El Salvador was endorsed by the Member States. The COSOP's overall objective is to reduce poverty and food insecurity among the rural population living in vulnerable conditions in the poorest areas of El Salvador, with special emphasis on Indigenous Peoples, women, youth and persons with disabilities. This will be achieved by promoting fair, inclusive and sustainable agrifood systems that provide nutritious and adequate diets. There were no queries by Member States on this COSOP.

El Salvador: Programme for the Sustainable, Inclusive and Nutritional Economic Development of Rural Areas in El Salvador (EB 2023/140/R.5)

13. The Programme for the Sustainable, Inclusive and Nutritional Economic Development of Rural Areas in El Salvador (Rural Adelante 2.0) aims to increase the incomes, resilience and food and nutritional security of rural families living in poverty. It will do so by tackling the main causes hindering development, such as limited capacity to adapt to climate change, limited access to land and consumption of healthy and nutritious food, low production and productivity, and limited access to markets. The project team leader highlighted the complementarity between IFAD's core business and supplementary funds. For Rural Adelante 2.0, close interaction between the design team and the Financing Facility for Remittances helped incorporate work being done on remittances and diaspora mobilization. The new operation was endorsed by the Member States.