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REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE PRESIDENT

TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD ON A PROPOSED

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GRANT

TO THE

**INTERNATIONAL FARMING SYSTEMS RESEARCH METHODOLOGY NETWORK
(RIMISP)**

FOR THE

FIDAMERICA NETWORK - PHASE II



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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CIARA	Foundation for Training and Applied Research in Agrarian Reform
KIP	Knowledge and Information Project
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PROCASUR	Southern Cone Training Programme in Rural Development
RIMISP	Non-Governmental Organization
TAG	Technical Assistance Grant



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FIDAMERICA NETWORK - PHASE II**

I submit the following Report and Recommendation on a proposed technical assistance grant (TAG) to the International Farming Systems Research Methodology Network (RIMISP) to support the FIDAMERICA network - phase II, in the amount of USD 800 000 for a three-year period.

I. BACKGROUND

1. At its Fifty-Fifth Session (13-14 September 1995), the Executive Board of IFAD approved a technical assistance grant (TAG 310-RIMISP) to support the creation of FIDAMERICA, a network of IFAD-supported projects in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). FIDAMERICA, which is organized and coordinated by the International Farming Systems Research Methodology Network (RIMISP), began operations in November 1995.

2. An interim evaluation of the FIDAMERICA project was conducted by IFAD's Office of Evaluation and Studies in February and March 1998. The main achievements of that project (TAG 310-RIMISP) include the following: (i) the programme was designed, set up, and implemented very rapidly; (ii) eighty per cent more projects and programmes than originally targeted are currently linked to the FIDAMERICA network; (iii) a website has been established containing: (a) detailed information on IFAD's 24 projects and programmes in LAC; (b) about 220 electronically published documents, mostly written by IFAD project and programme staff; (c) a virtual farmers' market and a virtual rural development library; and (d) a well categorized list of other Internet sites, including some 350 links; (iv) an average of 670 individuals visit FIDAMERICA's website each month, with an average 93 000 kilobytes of data downloaded each month; (v) a total of seven electronic lists have been set up and form an impressive system that supports communications and the exchange of knowledge and information among IFAD projects and programmes, as well as between them and a dozen other organizations and experts throughout LAC and other regions of the world; (vi) as of March 1998, FIDAMERICA had organized four major electronic conferences, a virtual Latin American contest of autobiographies of women peasant leaders, and four short electronic debates, and had also provided electronic facilities for electronic conferences of other IFAD-supported programmes; (vii) as of March 1998, FIDAMERICA had organized nine training workshops, with a virtual training workshop organized in 1998 jointly with the IFAD-financed Southern Cone Training Programme in Rural Development (PROCASUR) and the Foundation for Training and Applied Research in Agrarian Reform (CIARA). All the aforementioned activities were organized in response to explicit, stated demands of IFAD programmes and projects. In total, 173 persons from IFAD projects and programmes have been trained in Internet use in support of rural and agricultural development. Two training workshops for leaders of farmer organizations will be held in the near future; (viii) a 200-page training manual was drafted in 1996 and revised in 1998.



3. According to the evaluation, FIDAMERICA has had the following impact on the access of IFAD projects and programmes to information and knowledge, and on their decision-making processes: (i) the electronic conferences have allowed IFAD projects to disseminate, exchange, share, and debate experience, problems, and ideas; (ii) FIDAMERICA's website has provided a cost-effective means to disseminate information about the approaches, activities, and achievements of IFAD's projects and programmes in LAC. It has also been a useful point of entry into the Internet, with numerous links to sites specializing in issues and topics that are relevant to IFAD projects and programmes; (iii) thanks to the generalized use of electronic mail and the electronic lists established by the programme, communications have been significantly improved and at low cost; as a consequence, decision-making is now faster and more efficient; (iv) a very high percentage (75%) of ongoing IFAD operations in LAC are linked to the Internet. Without a doubt, no other multilateral organization in any region of the developing world has provided Internet access on such a massive scale to its projects and programmes.

4. FIDAMERICA has significantly raised IFAD's visibility in the region. Hundreds of grass-roots organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and governmental and international agencies have participated in one or more of the electronic meetings or have downloaded data or documents from the website, etc. IFAD is now seen as a leader in placing modern, Internet-based knowledge-and-information management systems at the service of agricultural development and rural poverty alleviation.

II. RATIONALE AND RELEVANCE TO IFAD

5. Rural and agricultural development are processes that both reflect and hinge on the decision-making capacity of local communities. Timely access to relevant knowledge and information, as well as greater social capacity to make use of these resources, are key factors in effectively harnessing "traditional" assets (i.e., land, labour, capital) in pursuit of development goals and objectives. IFAD's strategy recognizes this and, accordingly, its projects always include such components as training and technical assistance that are geared towards expanding the knowledge and information base of local communities. In order to enhance the capacity of these communities to make effective and sustainable use of this increased access to knowledge and information, IFAD projects also stress the concepts of participation, decentralization, and strengthening of local organizations and leadership systems. As the results of the first phase of the FIDAMERICA network show, the traditional approaches to enhancing local decision-making capacity can now be radically improved by tapping modern technologies in the fields of electronic telecommunications and information-and-knowledge management systems.

III. THE PROPOSED PROGRAMME

6. The general objective of the present programme is to support decision-making processes under IFAD operations in LAC by facilitating the systematization, documentation, archive, capture, communication, and exchange of knowledge and information through Internet-based electronic tools and services. The specific objectives are: (i) to support the development of human resources within IFAD's operations in LAC in terms of using Internet-based tools and services to improve project and programme efficiency and effectiveness; (ii) to promote and organize dynamic, sustainable processes for the systematization, documentation, archive, capture, communication, and exchange of information and knowledge in specific topics identified as being of high priority for IFAD operations in LAC; (iii) to adapt or design specific Internet-based electronic tools and services to support the processes described in paragraphs 8(a) and 8(b) below; and (iv) to create conditions for the financial and institutional sustainability of FIDAMERICA upon completion of this TAG.



7. Expected direct beneficiaries will include: (i) no less than 100 organizations of the rural poor in LAC that are working with IFAD projects and programmes; they will receive assistance under FIDAMERICA in the form of access to Internet-based tools and services in support of their economic and social activities; (ii) all of IFAD's projects and programmes in LAC, which will improve their decision-making processes by having better and more timely access to relevant, high-quality knowledge and information; (iii) several dozen public and private institutions in LAC that work directly with IFAD projects and programmes in delivering technical and financial services to the rural poor, who will also participate fully in activities under this programme; and (iv) IFAD, which will benefit from less costly and more efficient communications with its operations in LAC, as well as from the information and knowledge generated or systematized through FIDAMERICA's activities.

8. The proposed programme has three main components:

- (a) **Training.** Approximately 250 individuals will be trained in the use of Internet-based electronic tools and services to support rural and agricultural development. These beneficiaries will come from rural organizations (farmers cooperatives, rural women's groups, etc.), IFAD's programmes and projects in LAC, and public and private institutions that work directly with IFAD projects and programmes in delivering technical and financial services to the rural poor.
- (b) **Knowledge and Information Projects.** FIDAMERICA will implement four knowledge and information projects (KIPs). Each KIP is a systematic, coherent set of activities designed to reach clear and measurable objectives within a given time frame and applying well defined resources. The activities will be directly related to the systematization, documentation, archive, capture, communication, and exchange of knowledge and information using Internet-based electronic tools and services. Examples of these electronic tools and services include: electronic conferences, electronic newsletters, electronic publishing of gray literature and project documents, on-line distance training, human resources databases, institutional resources databases, on-line horizontal technical-assistance services, databases of "recommended practices", etc. The specific topics to be covered by the KIPs will be selected in a participatory manner, involving all of IFAD's programmes and projects in LAC, as well as IFAD staff and managers.
- (c) **Development of Electronic Tools and Services.** To support KIP activities and make sure that training-course topics are up to date, it is essential that FIDAMERICA develop new Internet-based electronic tools and services. The pace of innovation on the Internet is so fast that, without such a component, the network would become obsolete very rapidly. In keeping with the first phase (TAG 310-RIMISP), the basic strategy will be to use resources that are widely available on the Internet free of charge. Even so, these resources still need to be adapted, installed, managed, maintained, and operated. Some tools and services (such as the on-line databases) require the involvement of specialists.

9. The main achievements of the programme will be an Internet-based knowledge-and-information system involving no less than 100 organizations of the rural poor in LAC, IFAD, all of IFAD's programmes and projects in LAC, several dozen public and private institutions that work with the rural poor in LAC, and several hundred specialists and technical staff, covering all or almost all of the Latin American and Caribbean countries.

10. FIDAMERICA will propose a specific strategy for programme sustainability that could include such varied actors as national and international organizations, IFAD projects, and the private sector. This strategy will be submitted to IFAD's Technical Advisory and Latin America and the Caribbean Divisions for analysis one and a half years into the programme.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

11. The programme will have a steering committee that will meet electronically every three months and face-to-face a total of three times during the programme's three-year life. The committee will be made up of one IFAD representative and one RIMISP representative. There will also be a coordination committee, made up of the steering committee's members plus a representative from each of the four KIPs. The KIP representatives will be selected by the directors of the IFAD projects and programmes that decide to participate in each KIP. The responsibilities of the steering committee include: (i) define the general strategy of the programme within the framework of the present President's Report and the agreement between IFAD and RIMISP; (ii) approve the annual work plan that is to be proposed by RIMISP; and (iii) approve the internal evaluation of the annual work plan.

12. FIDAMERICA will have the following staff: a general coordinator, paid in part by IFAD and in part by RIMISP; a full-time administrative assistant; a half-time Internet specialist, who will develop the necessary electronic tools and services; a full-time Internet assistant, who will be responsible for day-to-day administration of the electronic conference systems, the electronic mailing lists, and updating the web pages of IFAD projects and programmes.

13. **Reports, evaluation, and audits.** RIMISP will present annual progress reports to IFAD. An interim evaluation will be conducted, with IFAD's participation, approximately six months before the end of the programme. The evaluation will focus on the accomplishments of FIDAMERICA and its impact on decision-making and learning processes in IFAD programmes and projects in LAC, and on the sustainability of the network after IFAD's support is phased out. An annual report of RIMISP's accounts, audited by qualified independent external auditors, will be submitted to IFAD within six months after the end of each fiscal year.

V. PROGRAMME COSTS AND FINANCING

14. The estimated total project cost over the three-year period will be USD 945 750. The cost will be financed by IFAD with a grant of USD 800 000, and by RIMISP with contributions estimated at USD 145 750.

15. The estimated budget for the programme is as follows, in USD, for the three-year period:

CATEGORY	IFAD	RIMISP	TOTAL
Salaries and honoraria	252 000	54 000	306 000
Steering and coordination committees	15 000	0	15 000
Training	140 000	0	140 000
Knowledge and information projects	220 000	0	220 000
Development of tools and services	27 000	0	27 000
Computer equipment and Internet services	51 000	0	51 000
Staff travel	21 000	0	21 000
Direct office expenses	0	78 500	78 500
Administrative costs	74 000	13 250	87 250
TOTAL	800 000	145 750	945 750



VI. RECOMMENDATION

16. I recommend that the Executive Board approve the proposed technical assistance grant in terms of the following resolution:

RESOLVED: that the Fund, in order to finance, in part, the FIDAMERICA Network - Phase II, for three years, shall make a grant not exceeding eight hundred thousand United States dollars (USD 800 000) to the International Farming Systems Research Methodology Network (RIMISP) upon such terms and conditions as shall be substantially in accordance with the terms and conditions presented to the Executive Board in this Report and Recommendation of the President.

Fawzi H. Al-Sultan
President

PROGRAMME COSTS AND FINANCING AND ALLOCATION OF IFAD GRANT

	IFAD (USD)	RIMISP (USD)	TOTAL (USD)
Salaries and honoraria	252 000	54 000	306 000
- General coordinator	81 000	54 000	135 000
- Administrative assistant	54 000	0	54 000
- Internet specialist	63 000	0	63 000
- Internet assistant	54 000	0	54 000
Steering committee	15 000	0	15 000
- Airplane tickets	10 000	0	10 000
- Per diems	5 000	0	5 000
Training	140 000	0	140 000
- Stipends for participants	80 000	0	80 000
- Fixed costs	60 000	0	60 000
Knowledge and information projects	220 000	0	220 000
- Electronic conferences	90 000	0	90 000
- Electronic databases	30 000	0	30 000
- Electronic lists	6 000	0	6 000
- Electronic newsletters	6 000	0	6 000
- On-line technical assistance	30 000	0	30 000
- On-line distance training	30 000	0	30 000
- Electronic publishing of documents	28 000	0	28 000
Development of tools and services	27 000	0	27 000
- Maintenance of website	9 000	0	9 000
- New tools and services	18 000	0	18 000
Computer equipment and Internet services	51 000	0	51 000
- Software	10 000	0	10 000
- Computers	6 000	0	6 000
- Internet service providers	35 000	0	35 000
Staff travel	21 000	0	21 000
- Airplane tickets	10 000	0	10 000
- Per diems	11 000	0	11 000
Direct office expenses	0	78 500	78 500
- Office rental	0	18 000	18 000
- Secretarial support	0	16 000	16 000
- Accountant	0	14 500	14 500
- Office equipment	0	11 000	11 000
- External auditor	0	4 000	4 000
- Telephone, fax, and mail	0	15 000	15 000
Administrative costs	74 000	13 250	87 250
TOTAL	800 000	145 750	945 750



APPENDIX II

MATRIX OF FIDAMERICA'S SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

ELECTRONIC TOOLS AND SERVICES	KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION PROJECTS (KIP)			
	KIP 1	KIP 2	KIP 3	KIP 4
Electronic conferences				
Human resources on-line database				
Institutional resources on-line database				
Best practices on-line database				
Electronic mailing lists				
Electronic publishing of documents				
On-line distance training				
On-line technical assistance				
Electronic newsletter				
Other electronic tools and services				
<i>General activities (not organized by KIP)</i>				
Training				
Development of electronic tools and services				