



IFAD

INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

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FIELD VISITS BY EXECUTIVE BOARD DIRECTORS

Background

1. Many multilateral development organizations arrange field visits for representatives of their governing bodies as part of their annual programme of work, the overall objective being to broaden the exposure of such visitors to realities on-the-ground. Among these organizations are the Asian Development Bank, United Nations Development Programme, World Food Programme and the World Bank.
2. IFAD has also arranged field visits for Executive Board Directors, usually in response to individual requests. Other field visits have been more systematically arranged, e.g. the National Roundtable Workshop for the Syria Country Programme Evaluation organized by the Office of Evaluation in April 2001, which included field visits by the six participating Executive Board Directors. More recently, the office of the Assistant President, Programme Management Department (PMD), organized the participation of Executive Board Directors in country visits related to the 2003 Field Presence Study. These field visits have consistently had very positive results, providing Executive Board Directors with the opportunity to familiarize themselves with grass-roots realities and IFAD programmes, as well as with the specific needs and aspirations of IFAD's target group.



Objective

3. The objective of a field-visit programme is to enhance Executive Board Directors' first-hand knowledge of IFAD projects at the field level and to use that knowledge to enhance Board deliberations. While quantitative data and written reports are essential, they do not enable Executive Directors to gain a full understanding of IFAD projects, many of which are very rich in terms of their qualitative and participatory processes. In addition, much project information does not lend itself to aggregation or inclusion in the generic aspects of reports on project portfolios. The results of IFAD projects can thus be best understood if observed within the context of the prevailing socio-economic circumstances of a given region, country and village. This is particularly true when attempting to understand such critical issues as empowerment through institutional capacity-building; adapting local knowledge; increasing the participation of women, indigenous peoples and other marginalized groups in economic activities; and protecting the environment on a sustainable basis.

4. A programme of field visits would enable Executive Board Directors to witness interaction among various IFAD activities and to understand how events are taking shape. In this way, the Executive Board Directors would gain a better understanding of poor rural people's opportunities and challenges as well as the possibilities for, and constraints on, donor coordination. The Directors would therefore obtain first-hand knowledge of how IFAD's projects are being used as strategic entry points for policy discussions on sensitive issues such as land reform, learn how isolated successes are being scaled up, and see how decisions taken at the global level have an impact on smallholder producers.

Implementation Modality

5. The implementation of a programme of this type would of necessity call for flexibility and attention to minimizing the burden of such visits on local authorities, IFAD country portfolio managers (CPMs) and project staff. These visits would therefore consist of small groups of Executive Board Directors (two or three) with a view to promoting dialogue and interaction with people in the field while minimizing any sense of intrusion that might be created.

6. The teams would visit a range of project/programme interventions, with emphasis on those that exemplify models of best practices or successful innovation. Every effort will be made to ensure that the various types of IFAD assistance are covered during the field trips, with particular focus on activities that are representative of IFAD operations in terms of their implementation, strategy and results orientation. In addition to field visits, arrangements might also be made for Executive Board Directors to participate in other major events organized by IFAD, such as project implementation and thematic workshops.

7. In keeping with the objectives of the programme, brief calls might be made to relevant ministers and officials in the capital cities of the countries involved. However, the bulk of the time would be spent at the village level. The duration of each trip would not normally exceed seven days, depending on the size and characteristics of the operation.

8. The Office of the Secretary of IFAD, with assistance from other divisions of the External Affairs Department (EAD) and PMD, will be responsible for managing the field visits programme. The experience of the Secretary's Office and CPMs suggests that preparing for such visits will require a considerable level of organization to synchronize the schedules and preferences of individual visitors. The Secretary's Office will prepare guidelines for managing visits in such a way that every Executive Board Director will have the opportunity to visit a project at least once within his/her three-year tenure period.

9. In consultation with PMD, EAD will organize a briefing session prior to each field visit and provide participants with background information on the countries and projects involved. To avoid additional



workload for CPMs, visitors will be provided with documents available within IFAD (e.g. Country Briefs, Project Status Reports and Country Issues Sheets).

Resource Implications

10. Based on the most recent cost estimates, the average cost per Executive Board Director would amount to USD 600 per day, including travel costs, terminal charges and daily subsistence allowance, which for a seven-day visit would total approximately USD 4 200.

11. While the participation of about ten Executive Board Directors per annum is envisioned, annual costs will vary depending on the number of Directors claiming reimbursement of travel expenditures.

Recommendation

12. The Executive Board may wish to endorse the proposal set out above to implement the programme of field visits by Executive Board Directors and to authorize the President of IFAD to finance the programme from the Fund's annual administrative budget.