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**IFAD**  
**INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT**  
**Executive Board – Eightieth Session**  
Rome, 17 – 18 December 2003

**AD-HOC WORKING GROUP OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD**  
**ON FIELD PRESENCE**

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

1. During the period September – December 2003, i.e. since the last EB-meeting, the Working Group accompanied the process of formulating a Field Presence Pilot Programme (FPPP), as authorised by the EB in September. The group met three times during this period, to discuss the guidelines and criteria for the selection of countries and instruments and monitor the progress of preparation of the documents for the present session. On 11 November, many of you attended a working lunch during which I had the opportunity to update you on the progress made.
2. The document in front of us (EB 2003/80/R.4) in the view of the Working Group reflects well the recommendations of earlier EB-meetings and responds to the needs, constraints and opportunities identified during earlier studies, discussions and, in particular, the 15 case studies undertaken prior to the September EB. We support the notion of enhancing field presence with a view to the four dimensions of project implementation, policy dialogue, partnership building and knowledge management, while emphasising the need for using this pilot programme in particular to strengthen the impact of IFAD's catalytic functions and its contribution to in-country processes such as PRSP and UNDAF.
3. The Working Group supports the guidelines and criteria stipulated for the design and implementation of the FPPP and in particular the overall approach of responding to specific needs and strengthening local capacities. We fully agree that each resulting initiative should be unique in terms of instruments and human and financial resources allocated to it. The scope of work and terms of reference of the field presence personnel are demanding and challenging, but we feel that with adequate guidance from Headquarters and sufficient delegation of authority, qualified regional and national experts will be able to respond to these expectations.

4. We have reviewed the proposed time plan for implementing the three year pilot programme and its evaluation and consider it to be ambitious but feasible. The group is particularly interested in having a wide variety of experiences and lessons available in time for the consultations leading to the eighth replenishment of IFAD's resources and feels that this is doable. In this context we urge IFAD to launch as soon as possible the implementation of the first pilot initiatives and to complete the design of the remaining seven during the first half of 2004.

5. The Working Group has deliberately refrained from involving itself in the selection of countries and instruments for the pilot phase. We are satisfied that the selection is being based on the guidelines and criteria contained in the present document and rests on the in-depth knowledge of country needs and conditions held by the staff of the regional divisions. We also note with satisfaction that the eight initiative briefs tabled for the Board's information already cover all geographic regions as well as sub-regional activities and trust that this balance will be maintained in finalising the remaining seven initiatives. We particularly encourage IFAD to continue to look for innovative solutions to respond to the issue of enhancing field presence.

6. While we feel that the design and implementation of the FPPP should be left fully in the hands of the Secretariat, we also consider it essential that the Board be given the opportunity of monitoring the process and receiving annual progress reports. The Working Group therefore proposes to continue supporting the process and invites the views of Board members on the future composition and mandate of the group. The latter should, in our opinion, embrace two main areas:

- Regular monitoring of the FPPP-implementation, learning and lesson sharing: we are convinced that the pilot programme will provide some crucial insights including both through positive and negative lessons which will need to be taken into account in future decisions related to field presence and in country capacity
- Conceptual support in linking the FPPP with relevant ongoing corporate initiatives, in particular the evaluation exercises related to supervision modalities and direct supervision, the Independent External Evaluation, strategy development through COSOPs and the introduction of Performance Based Allocation and Results and Impact Measurement Systems.

7. The group will continue to keep Board members informed about its activities. Moreover, we propose that the Secretariat submit brief annual progress reports to the EB for information at each April meeting, starting in April 2005.