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IFAD
INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
Executive Board – Eighty-Second Session
Rome, 8-9 September 2004

REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSON
ON THE
THIRTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE EVALUATION COMMITTEE

1. This report covers the deliberations held by the Evaluation Committee during its Thirty-Sixth Session on 1 July 2004. There was one main agenda item on that occasion, namely the draft proposal on the revised terms of reference (TOR) and rules of procedure (ROP) of the Committee. Moreover, under Other Business, the Committee took a decision on the date and agenda related to its last (Thirty-Eighth) planned session of 2004, in December.
2. In terms of process, the Thirty-Sixth Session marked the second occasion on which the Committee deliberated on its revised TOR and ROP. It had held initial deliberations on the same topic during its Fourth Special Session on 20 February 2004, based on a discussion paper prepared by IFAD's Office of Evaluation (OE). Following the Committee's comments and guidance on 20 February, OE was requested on behalf of the Committee to prepare the draft proposal on the Committee's revised TOR and ROP. This proposal was discussed at the Thirty-Sixth Session. On this occasion, the Committee requested OE to refine the document further by incorporating the decisions it had reached, and to present the revised document for further consideration at its Thirty-Seventh Session on 3 September. The Committee would then finalize the document and submit it to the Executive Board in December 2004 for approval.
3. The discussions on 1 July were productive and a consensus was reached in almost all key areas of the Committee's revised TOR and ROP. There was one main issue (operation policies) on which the Committee decided to have further consultation during its 3 September session before taking a final view (see paragraph 8).
4. In the following paragraphs, a summary of the key decisions and discussions is provided for the Executive Board's information.

5. **The Evaluation Committee's mandate.** There was overall consensus that the Committee should continue, as in the past, to have an advisory role to the Executive Board. That is, it would advise the Board on important evaluation findings and lessons learned. It would also make recommendations to the Board on all aspects of IFAD's evaluation policy and on specific evaluation activities in order to strengthen the feedback loop and the Board's capacity to carry out its oversight responsibilities in relation to IFAD management and OE. As such, the Committee would provide its feedback and recommendations intended for IFAD management and/or OE to the Board for the latter's consideration.

6. **The expansion of the Committee's mandate to cover self-evaluation.** There was considerable discussion on this issue. The Committee recognized that it was important for IFAD to strengthen further its self-evaluation capabilities, which, together with the independent evaluations by OE, were an essential component of IFAD's overall evaluation system. The Committee also noted that the executive board committees dealing with evaluation at the Asian Development Bank (AsDB), Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and World Bank were all already mandated to review in their respective institutions both independent and self-evaluation reports. Following thorough reflection, the Evaluation Committee decided to recommend to the Board that the Committee's mandate be expanded to include the systematic consideration of two key self-evaluation reports prepared by IFAD management, namely the Progress Report on the Project Portfolio (which is currently submitted by the Programme Management Department for discussion at the Board at its April sessions) and any possible revision of the Results and Impact Management System. These documents would be reviewed by the Committee before they were discussed at the Board. The Committee's main task in reviewing these documents would be to advise the Board on the adequacy and quality of the self-evaluation capabilities and findings contained in these documents.

7. **The possible role of the Committee with regard to operation policies.** There was much interesting discussion on this subject. Some Committee members felt that it would be useful for the Committee to review policies prepared by IFAD management for consideration by the Board and to advise the latter accordingly. That is, the Committee would review the policy proposal and inform the Board whether due consideration had been taken of the key lessons learned and the recommendations from relevant evaluations. However, the Committee could not come to a common understanding on this matter. Some members wanted more information on the number and nature of policies discussed in the Board in the past. The Committee requested OE to provide this information for its session on 3 September, as it would allow members to take a more informed decision and enable added reflection on the consequences for the Committee's overall functioning should it decide to discuss operation policies also. Other Committee members felt that the Committee should confine itself to discussing only the revisions of those corporate-level policies that have been evaluated by OE or new policies that have emerged as a follow-up to an OE corporate-level evaluation. There were also some members who did not feel the Committee should extend its mandate to cover operation policies, and who doubted whether the Committee had the time and resources to take on the additional responsibility.

8. On the same issue, the Committee noted that at the IDB and World Bank, the board committees on evaluation already dealt with operation policies. The relevant AsDB board committee was also considering expanding its mandate along similar lines. It is expected that the Committee will take a decision on this matter at its session on 3 September. I shall provide a brief oral report to the Executive Board in September on the results of the Committee's decision on this subject.

9. **Scope of work.** There was an agreement on 1 July that the Committee would: (a) review the specific evaluation work required by the Evaluation Policy for presentation to the Board and the Committee, as well as the two self-evaluation reports referred to in paragraph 6 above; and (b) review all corporate-level evaluation reports, and selected country programme, thematic and project evaluation reports. With regard to item (a), this would include the (i) Annual Report on the Results and Impact of IFAD Operations; (ii) annual OE work programme and budget; and (iii) President's

Report on the Status of Implementation of Evaluation Recommendations together with OE's comments on that report. There was wide consensus that the Committee should, as in the past, continue to consider the OE annual work programme and budget. However, it was noted that as per the Board decision, while reviewing IFAD's programme of work and budget, the Audit Committee would also review the OE work programme and budget. To facilitate the Audit Committee's work with respect to the OE budget, the Evaluation Committee chairperson would share his draft report of its October session to the December Board with the chairperson of the Audit Committee for informal circulation in the Audit Committee.¹

10. **Meeting and reporting.** There was consensus that more time needs to be devoted to Committee activities. For this purpose, the Committee proposes in the future to hold up to five regular meetings a year, and any additional ad hoc sessions that the Committee chairperson might like to convene. The duration of each session, which might be extended to cover a full day, would be determined on a case-by-case basis depending on the number of agenda items the Committee was invited to consider.

11. **Timing of meetings and reporting to the Board.** It was deemed important that the Committee chairperson's report be incisive with clear recommendations and that it be shared with Board members far enough in advance to allow time for its consideration. It was therefore decided that the report should be provided to Board members at least five days before the Board meeting at which it would be discussed.

12. This decision will have an impact on the timing of Evaluation Committee meetings, which at present are largely held in conjunction with Executive Board sessions. There was consensus that the timing of the Committee meeting should be determined by the topic(s) under consideration, and whether or not the same topics were planned for discussion at the subsequent Board session. This was considered important to allow the Board to benefit from the summary of the Committee's deliberations and recommendations as contained in the chairperson's report. Therefore, it was agreed that those Committee meetings that consider topic(s) included in the agenda of the following Board should be held well in advance of that Board session. This would allow the Committee chairperson to prepare and dispatch his or her report in a timely manner (at least five days in advance of the relevant Board meeting). However, it was also agreed that a Committee meeting should be held in conjunction with the Board when the Board and the Committee were not considering the same topic(s), as there was no pressing need to submit the Committee chairperson's report to the following Board in such cases.

13. The timing of Committee meetings will have to take into account the need to allow for sufficient time to prepare the chairperson's report to the Board, and time for its editing, translation and dispatch to Board members. However, due to the travel costs related to the participation of non-Rome-based members in Committee meetings and the eventual interpretation requirements², the Committee requested the Secretariat to explore the possibility of holding as many Committee sessions as possible in conjunction with the Board and Governing Council meetings.

14. **Documentation for the Committee meetings.** It was decided that for each evaluation report discussed, OE would provide the Committee with a sufficiently comprehensive executive summary (say 5-10 pages) together with the agreement at completion point (ACP). The entire evaluation report would also be provided, which would include an executive summary, ACP and main report. The executive summary and the ACP would be provided both in English and in the original language

¹ In fact, a similar arrangement is already in place at the IDB, where the Audit Committee does not formally discuss the annual work programme and budget of the IDB's Office for Evaluation and Oversight, which is reviewed by the policy and evaluation committee.

² Interpreters are frequently recruited internationally. There are some cost savings if such interpreters are brought for both the Committee and Board meetings held in conjunction, rather than for eventual stand-alone Committee meetings.

(should the report be written in Arabic, French or Spanish). The main report would be available in the original language only, as translation of the main evaluation report into English or other IFAD official languages would have a major cost implication for the operations of the Committee.

15. **Membership and governance.** The Committee agreed that the current arrangements for the Committee's composition (four members from List A, two from List B and three from List C) and the election of its chairperson³ should be maintained. Moreover, it was agreed that Board members who were not also members of the Committee should be allowed to participate in Committee deliberations as observers. Finally, to strengthen the evaluation knowledge of Committee members, it was suggested that the current practice of organizing field visits for the Committee should be continued and that new Committee members should be thoroughly briefed on various issues related to IFAD's evaluation function.

16. **Resource issues.** The proposed new TOR and ROP under development may have some resource implications for the Evaluation Committee as well as for OE and the Office of the Secretary. In light of the current zero-growth directive of the Board on IFAD's administrative budget, any significant (incremental) increase in the costs, including those caused by an eventual extension of the Committee's mandate, might have to be absorbed by the OE budget. This issue will be discussed more comprehensively in the September session of the Committee prior to the formulation of the detailed OE budget proposal for 2005. For this purpose, OE will include a contingency allocation in its 2005 budget proposal, pending a Board decision on the revised TOR and ROP of the Evaluation Committee.

17. **Other business discussed on 1 July.** The Committee decided to hold its Thirty-Eighth Session on 14 December 2004. It felt that it was important to hold its last session after the December Executive Board so that it could plan its agenda for 2005 based on the Board's decision on the revised TOR and ROP of the Committee.

18. With regard to the agenda for the Thirty-Eighth Session, the Committee noted the reasons for the delay in the implementation of the corporate-level evaluation on IFAD's direct supervision pilot programme. It agreed with OE's proposal to replace this evaluation with the Bolivia country programme evaluation, with the understanding that the Committee would discuss the direct supervision evaluation in 2005.

³ As per Board decision, the chairperson will be a List B or C Committee member.

