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REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE PRESIDENT

TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD ON A PROPOSED

GRANT

UNDER THE

GLOBAL/REGIONAL GRANTS WINDOW

TO THE

**REGIONAL PROGRAMME FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING
(PROCASUR)**

FOR THE

LEARNING ROUTES TRAINING PROGRAMME

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. BACKGROUND	1
II. RATIONALE/RELEVANCE TO IFAD	1
III. THE PROPOSED PROGRAMME	2
IV. EXPECTED OUTPUTS AND BENEFITS	3
V. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS	4
VI. INDICATIVE PROGRAMME COSTS AND FINANCING	4
VII. RECOMMENDATION	5
APPENDIX	
LOGICAL FRAMEWORK	1

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EXECUTIVE BOARD ON A PROPOSED GRANT UNDER THE GLOBAL/REGIONAL
GRANTS WINDOW TO THE
REGIONAL PROGRAMME FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING
(PROCASUR)
FOR THE
LEARNING ROUTES TRAINING PROGRAMME**

I submit the following report and recommendation on a proposed grant to the Regional Programme for Rural Development Training (PROCASUR) for the Learning Routes Training Programme in the amount of USD 900 000 for a three-year period.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In recent years, IFAD has been promoting more effective and faster learning methods, with the valuable support of governments and local institutions. Through a replicated “see and learn” methodology, IFAD-funded projects in Peru, and more recently in Bolivia, have received hundreds of visitors from other countries and projects (including those not directly related to IFAD) regionwide. These study tours have been organized, carried out and evaluated using a constantly evolving methodology called “learning routes”. Learning routes have proved useful in fostering innovation, and should now be organized systematically, consolidated and replicated in other development initiatives in the region.

2. This report recommends that IFAD provide support for the Learning Routes Training Programme, which will focus on the following thematic areas: (i) private systems of technical assistance; (ii) strategies to implement IFAD-funded projects; (iii) management of rural financial services; (iv) methodologies for participatory natural resource management; (v) management of irrigation systems; (vi) local governments and rural development; and (vii) management of indigenous ecotourism.

II. RATIONALE/RELEVANCE TO IFAD

3. The overarching strategic objectives that drive the IFAD Policy for Grant Financing, which was approved by the Executive Board in December 2003, are: (i) promoting pro-poor research and innovative approaches and technological options to enhance field-levels impact; and (ii) building the pro-poor capacities of partner institutions, including community-based organizations and NGOs. Deriving from these core objectives, IFAD’s grant support relates to: (i) IFAD’s target groups and their household food-security strategies, specifically in remote and marginalized agroecological areas; (ii) technologies that build on traditional knowledge systems, are gender-responsive and enhance and diversify the productive potential of resource-poor farming systems by improving productivity and addressing production bottlenecks; (iii) access to productive assets (land and water, financial services, labour and technology, including indigenous technology) and their sustainable and productive management; (iv) a policy framework that provides the rural poor with an incentive to reach higher levels of productivity, thereby reducing their dependence on transfers; and (v) an institutional framework within which formal and informal, public- and private-sector, local and national institutions provide services to the economically vulnerable according to their comparative advantages.

4. The Learning Routes Training Programme will respond to IFAD's strategic objective (ii), building the pro-poor capacities of partner institutions, including community-based organizations and NGOs, by strengthening both human and social capital, closing the gap between the traditional training services offered by projects and programmes and the new demands for innovation and replication of best practices. All too often, the present offer of training services is too academic and does not respond to the real needs of users and project beneficiaries. IFAD therefore needs to create practical tools and mechanisms that can test the introduction of innovations in different contexts and countries. The programme also responds to a specific aim of IFAD's grant support, namely enabling the rural poor to overcome their poverty and increasing the collective capacities of governments, the private sector, civil society and development institutions to put the rural poor at the centre of their efforts. Finally, the establishment of a consolidated network for knowledge gathering and dissemination will enhance the Fund's capacity to establish long-term strategic linkages with its development partners and to multiply the effects of its agricultural research and training programmes.

5. In brief, the grant's main aims will be to: (i) focus learning route activities on Latin American countries, mainly Andean countries and members of the Southern Cone Common Market; (ii) incorporate technological innovations in the programme's training activities with the objective of establishing a permanent and dynamic knowledge matrix for development agents, especially project managers, in collaboration with FIDAMERICA, the Internet-based network of organizations and projects working with the rural poor in Latin America and the Caribbean; (iii) bring together and take advantage of the region's available human resources with technical expertise and wide experience in the design, implementation and supervision of rural development projects. The participation of technical teams that have worked in different stages of the project cycle will be crucial for achieving this objective; (iv) increasingly incorporate in programme activities both gender aspects and environmental issues, building on the experience of projects that have been successful in these areas; (v) support the Fund's activities promoting the exchange of experiences among donors specialized in rural development and poverty; (vi) develop new support services for programme management during implementation (e.g. tailored advisory services and specific technical assistance) and facilitate a constructive policy dialogue with national authorities, supporting their need to build policies based on verifiable best practices; and (vii) increase knowledge of how innovations are applied and adapted.

III. THE PROPOSED PROGRAMME

6. The purpose of the proposed programme is to contribute to improving the implementation and management of rural development and poverty reduction projects, especially those that IFAD cofinances with other partners, in the following Latin American countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The programme is a response to the growing demand for on-the-job training. Institutions working in rural development are looking for quick answers based on concrete experiences, which has underscored the need to combine formal and academic training with solid and relevant fieldwork. The programme will address this need through capacity-building aimed at increasing the region's human and social capital.

7. The programme's specific objectives are, among others, to: (i) enhance the knowledge accumulated by rural associations, peasants and organizations implementing and operating rural development projects (mainly those financed by IFAD), by identifying and organizing systematically successful experiences and disseminating information on them; (ii) design, execute, validate and replicate innovative solutions and activities that have a direct impact on the management of rural development projects; and (iii) improve the design and management of rural development projects through the analysis of policies and best management practices, involving farmers, project designers and public policy-makers.

8. Under the proposed grant, the programme will implement three main components:
- (i) **Advisory and technical assistance services for the identification and design of learning routes.** This component will be implemented in close coordination with IFAD's grant programme in the region.
 - (ii) **Training services.** The programme will promote the exchange of rural development experience gained by government agencies, project coordination units, service providers and leaders of rural organizations.
 - (iii) **Development and dissemination of innovative rural development practices and ideas.** The results and impact of the programme will be organized systematically, tested and replicated among other IFAD and partner organization projects. For this purpose, the programme will produce records and publications, especially audiovisual material, which will be distributed to government agencies, other development agents and beneficiary organizations. Dissemination tools and mechanisms will be included in learning modules to ensure greater institutional impact.

9. The programme aims to design and organize 28 learning routes benefiting up to 200 technical staff and 200 local leaders, 40% of whom will be women. This is expected to meet the main demands of rural development agents and beneficiary associations, especially those representing the most vulnerable segments of society. Although demand will determine the specific learning routes to be designed and organized, the following broad areas of interest can already be identified: (i) direct funds transfer; (ii) different modalities for the competitive allocation of resources; (iii) natural resource management practices; (iv) planning instruments for small farmers and mapping of local talent; (v) performance evaluation; (vi) new businesses opportunities for rural income-generation; (vii) methodologies for assessing tangible and intangible assets; and (viii) local governments and sustainability of rural development projects.

10. Among communities and beneficiary associations, especially those that are highly specialized, there is a demand for studies using the learning routes approach in the following areas: (i) markets for traditional textiles; (ii) dairy processing; (iii) vegetable fibre microenterprises; (iv) ecotourism; (v) management of water resources; and (vi) markets for organic products.

11. Projects, institutions and associations that have used learning routes have elaborated a plan for the implementation of innovations in order to include the lessons learned as regular management practices. These organizations are interested in replicating their "acquired experience" so as to enhance the technical knowledge of specialists (professionals, rural community members, artisans, etc.) in order to facilitate the adoption of innovations in each respective area. Up to eight IFAD ongoing projects will be selected to receive assistance in designing and developing an implementation plan for innovations.

IV. EXPECTED OUTPUTS AND BENEFITS

12. The programme's main outputs will be to:
- (i) provide support services to facilitate the use of learning routes as a training tool in several projects in Latin America, to the direct benefit of 200 technical staff members, 60 farmers' associations (service providers) and 400 rural organizations (service users);
 - (ii) design, implement and test 28 learning routes at national and subregional level (e.g. Brazil and Colombia will provide knowledge on microenterprises; Bolivia and Peru on markets of rural services, natural resource management and successful peasant organizations; Ecuador and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on financial services);

- (iii) provide about 80 farmers' associations with systematically organized knowledge and enhance their capacities to disseminate this knowledge;
 - (iv) offer specific training courses on management techniques and related issues (private support services, leadership, beneficiary empowerment, human resources) to 12 projects in Latin America, benefiting 1 000 people directly (technicians, peasants, artisans) and 2 000 indirectly;
 - (v) provide training to about 500 co-implementing partners;
 - (vi) produce 20 print and audiovisual publications, documenting results and implementation impact; and
 - (vii) set up an impact evaluation system for programme activities.
13. Among its main outcomes, the programme is expected to:
- (i) contribute to building an efficient regional market for technical assistance services and the exchange of experiences, adding value to the knowledge accumulated by implementing agencies, IFAD projects and beneficiaries organizations;
 - (ii) create a service provider for IFAD operations in the region;
 - (iii) contribute directly to human capital formation linked to rural development, and increase the social capital of local and civil society organizations; and
 - (iv) support beneficiary organizations in becoming active providers of services that will contribute to the design of future IFAD operations in this region and others.

V. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

14. PROCASUR will be the recipient of the IFAD grant and will administer resources based on an approved annual workplan and budget (AWP/B). A steering committee, composed of three directors of IFAD-funded projects in Latin America, IFAD country programme managers and one PROCASUR representative, will: (i) coordinate and guide programme implementation; (ii) review AWP/Bs and impact evaluation studies; and (iii) carry out monitoring and evaluation activities.

15. IFAD-funded projects operating in the region will draw up a cooperation agreement with PROCASUR, in which the responsibilities and obligations of each party, including financial obligations, will be specified. Providers of training and technical assistance services will participate in programme activities on an open competitive basis. PROCASUR will submit to IFAD an annual report containing an in-depth analysis of activities undertaken using a monitoring and evaluation system developed for this purpose. There will be two evaluation exercises during the life of the proposed grant. These will be undertaken at mid-term and at the closing date. PROCASUR will submit annual audited statements prepared by independent auditors agreeable to IFAD.

VI. INDICATIVE PROGRAMME COSTS AND FINANCING

16. The total programme cost will be USD 1 500 000. Of this amount, IFAD will provide USD 900 000 (60% of total costs), beneficiaries, USD 400 000 (27%) and PROCASUR USD 200 000 (13%).

Summary of Programme Costs

Category of Expenses	IFAD	Beneficiaries	PROCASUR	Total
Salary of regional coordinator	75 000	15 000	20 000	110 000
Consultancy services, travel and daily subsistence allowance (DSA)				
Salaries of designers of learning routes	100 000	64 200	15 000	179 200
Travel and DSA of designers	30 000	45 000	4 800	79 800
Salaries of innovations plan implementers	35 000	23 800	5 200	64 000
Travel and DSA innovations plan implementers	10 000	22 000	-	32 000
Training services				
Salaries of technical assistance coordinators	140 000	-	-	140 000
Regional instructors and specialists	91 000	-	7 000	98 000
DSA	80 000	140 000	4 000	224 000
Travel	80 000	70 000	4 000	154 000
Supporting material	27 000	20 000	16 000	63 000
Organization of results	42 000	-	14 000	56 000
Dissemination of results				
Production or materials	71 000	-	10 000	81 000
Evaluation system	20 000	-	10 000	30 000
Workshops to disseminate results	9 000	-	-	9 000
Administrative expenses	90 000	-	90 000	180 000
Total	900 000	400 000	200 000	1 500 000

VII. RECOMMENDATION

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

RESOLVED: that the Fund, in order to finance, in part, the Learning Routes Training Programme for three years, shall make a grant not exceeding nine hundred thousand United States dollars (USD 900 000) to the Regional Programme for Rural Development Training (PROCASUR) 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.

Lennart Båge
President

LOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Objectives	Indicators	Means of Verification	Critical Assumptions
<p>Development objective To build the human and social capital of the rural poor and address key objectives of IFAD's Strategic Framework: enabling the rural poor to overcome their poverty and increase collective capacities of governments, the private sector, civil society and development institutions to put the rural poor at the centre of their efforts.</p>			
<p>Purpose Contribute to improving the implementation and management of rural development and poverty reduction projects in rural areas in Latin America.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and types of innovative services designed • Number and types of innovative services implemented • Good management practices incorporated in the implementation of projects • Innovations adopted by beneficiary associations • Sustainable mechanisms established 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project reports • Field presence reports • Cooperating institution reports • Activity evaluations • Final evaluation 	The projects have training demands and needs, and are interested in solving them regionally.
<p>Outputs</p>			
Accumulated knowledge of rural associations, peasants, organizations of implementers of rural development projects, systematizing, identifying and disseminating their successful experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and type of systematized cases • Number and type of users that request services • Number and type of users that offer services • Number of projects that carry out implementation plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project reports • Activity evaluation reports • PROCASUR reports • Record of supply and demand associations • Mid-term evaluation 	
Design, implement, test and replicate innovative solutions and activities with results and direct impacts on management of rural development projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of learning routes carried out • Number and type of beneficiaries ,by gender, with emphasis on the most vulnerable • Number and type of client requests met • Total days of training carried out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning routes reports • Participants evaluations • Innovative practices incorporated in the management of projects 	
Improve the design and management of rural development projects through the analysis of policies and best management practice, involving peasants, designers and government policy-makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of projects that adopt learning routes of methods, and this is reflected in their budgets • Number of rural associations that offer training services • Number and type of beneficiaries, by gender • Number of agencies that apply Learning Routes services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) reports • AWP/Bs • Project reports • Project budgets and implementation plans 	There are technical resources available for cofinancing the design and implementation of learning routes.
Disseminate knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and type of materials produced • Number and type of materials disseminated • Number of publications requested 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M&E reports • Applications to participate • User records • Publications produced 	