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IFAD
INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
Executive Board – Eighty-seventh Session
Rome, 19-20 April 2006

REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE EVALUATION COMMITTEE
ON THE
FORTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE EVALUATION COMMITTEE

1. This report covers the deliberations of the Evaluation Committee at its forty-third session, held on 7 April 2006. All Committee members, except for Ireland and Nigeria, attended the session. In addition, representatives from China, France, Mali, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland participated in the session as observers. Various IFAD staff members attended the meeting, including the Assistant President, Programme Management Department (PMD); the Director of the Office of Evaluation (OE); and the Director of the Near East and North Africa Division (PN). Four agenda items were considered during the meeting: (i) the portfolio performance report together with the comments of OE on the report; (ii) the evaluation of the Morocco Tafilalet and Dades Rural Development Project; (iii) the review of corporate business processes; and (iv) other business.

2. **Portfolio performance report and comments of the Office of Evaluation.** The Committee discussed the 2005 portfolio performance report presented by PMD together with the comments of OE on the document. In introducing the report, the Assistant President, PMD, summarized the salient features of the performance of the portfolio in 2005 and the changes that had been made in the report. The Director, OE, emphasized the importance of the report as a management tool and the improvements over last year's document. An overview of OE's comments was delivered by the Deputy Director, OE.

3. The Evaluation Committee noted that the quality of the report had improved significantly vis-à-vis last year's submission, as had its coverage and usefulness. Participants were also informed by PMD and OE that a continuous learning process had been established to ensure that the report would continue to grow as a management tool for IFAD and a reporting instrument to the Executive Board and the Evaluation Committee.

4. The Evaluation Committee concurred with OE's observations on the report regarding the need for deepening its analytical content in some areas. In particular, Committee members requested that future reports provide: (i) a more comprehensive explanation of performance in key areas; (ii) additional data on impact; and (iii) further details on management actions taken to address critical issues in the portfolio.

5. In addition to the aforementioned, the Committee had a number of observations and comments on the findings related to partnership, targeting and gender issues. Concerning partnerships, the Committee expressed the need for IFAD to develop guidelines for strengthening partnerships, which would serve as a reference for the country programme management teams and others. On targeting, the Committee noted the need to develop a common understanding on who the Fund's main target groups were; this should be articulated in the forthcoming targeting strategy to be presented to the Executive Board in September. Building grass-roots institutions and evolving the right processes help in social capital formation and empowerment, especially of women. This impacts directly on livelihood issues. The Committee noted that influencing changes in behavioural patterns at the societal level helps to create a conducive environment for institutional change and underlined the need for continuous efforts in this direction.

6. The Committee further highlighted the need to ensure that IFAD activities were firmly anchored in national strategies for rural poverty reduction. Also mentioned was the need to define realistic objectives for IFAD's role in policy dialogue processes at the country level. In this regard, the importance of documenting and linking local experiences to higher-level policy dialogue initiatives was considered important. This is all the more pertinent in the case of middle-income countries where a need for realignment of strategies is being felt. On another topic, the Committee noted that, in the future, the report could include a short overview of how IFAD planned to engage in the broader, ongoing United Nations reform processes. Lastly, while recognizing the crucial role of governments, the Committee recalled the importance of ensuring that non-governmental organizations and other civil society institutions, including the private sector, are included in the development process in an appropriate manner.

7. The Assistant President, PMD, provided further information and clarification on some of the key issues raised, including – as mentioned by some members of the Evaluation Committee – the very inclusive and effort-intensive process involved in preparing the portfolio performance report. On targeting, while recognizing the need to have an institutional position, he noted the importance of also including the Evaluation Committee and the Executive Board in the debate. He agreed that partnerships are fundamental for IFAD and, in fact, form the building blocks of the new operating model. In this regard, he reassured the participants that IFAD does indeed plan to strengthen strategic partnerships under the Action Plan. The Assistant President reaffirmed IFAD's objective of promoting pro-poor policies and its commitment to being included, as appropriate, in donor coordination and in-country policy processes. In this connection, he noted that the grants programme was increasingly being utilized constructively in pursuit of IFAD's policy objectives. Among other issues, the PMD Senior Portfolio Manager commented that due attention was being devoted to gender mainstreaming in IFAD-funded operations. He conveyed that, for example, specific and more stringent indicators had been recently introduced that will allow the Fund to gain a deeper understanding of the broader impact on women, including on issues such as women's role in decision-making at the household and community levels. He further mentioned that, since around 80% of information being generated through the Results and Impact Management System contains gender-disaggregated data, the Fund's accomplishment in this area was very positive.

8. **Morocco project evaluation.** OE provided a concise presentation on the completion evaluation of the Morocco Tafilalet and Dades Rural Development Project and highlighted the key findings and recommendations from the evaluation. The Committee noted the importance of this evaluation, not only due to the large size of the project itself, but also because it would serve as a useful source of information and evidence for the forthcoming country programme evaluation in Morocco. The Committee also expressed appreciation for the quality of the evaluation analysis and its broad agreement with the findings and recommendations contained in the report.

9. The Committee agreed that the project design was broadly in line with the country's key sectoral strategies for rural poverty alleviation and IFAD's overall objectives as contained in the

country strategic opportunities paper (COSOP). The participants acknowledged that project implementation progress was very good, which was noteworthy especially for such a complex, multi-component area development project as this one in Morocco. The Committee expressed satisfaction with the good impact the project had had on household assets, income-generating opportunities, social capital and the reduced workload for fetching water and maintaining small-scale infrastructure.

10. The Committee noted that future projects would need to ensure even greater integration between various components. Concerns were also raised by the participants regarding existing threats to the sustainability of the project, underscoring the importance of developing an exit strategy in the early stages of the project. In response to the Committee's request, OE clarified that the lessons learned and recommendations contained in the completion evaluation report were intended both for the Government of Morocco and IFAD, as they could be useful in the design and implementation of similar ongoing and future operations in the country. As indicated in the evaluation report, the Committee noted that project supervision by the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development had been weak and wondered how IFAD was addressing this critical issue.

11. The Director, PN, conveyed her satisfaction with the overall evaluation quality and process, noting that the lessons generated were useful to PN not only for the Morocco programme but also for the region as a whole. She also informed the Committee that, while the project had been successful and the Government had expressed keen interest in a second phase, PN had decided to defer such a decision until after the preparation of the new Morocco COSOP. Among other issues, the Director, PN, also explained that PN had held important consultations with the Arab Fund in December 2005 to review the partnership between IFAD and the Arab Fund. Given that project supervision is not an area of strength of the Arab Fund, it was agreed that future collaboration would focus more on issues of cofinancing, knowledge-sharing and so on.

12. **Review of corporate business processes.** Following an introduction by the member from Switzerland, the Committee discussed the feasibility of reviewing corporate business processes developed by IFAD management. While the Committee agreed that discussions on corporate business processes were important for enhancing IFAD's operations, it was noted that any discussion on selected topics should be undertaken within the framework of evolving IFAD business processes, in particular the Action Plan to Enhance IFAD's Development Effectiveness.

13. **Other business.** Under this agenda item, the Director, OE, shared information with the Committee on three specific topics: (i) the evaluation of IFAD's Action Plan for Improving its Development Effectiveness, and its implications for the Evaluation Committee and the Office of Evaluation; (ii) the peer review on the performance of the central evaluation function of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); and (iii) the harmonization of self-evaluation and independent evaluation systems of IFAD.

14. On the first topic, the Committee discussed the implications for its 2006 provisional agenda caused by the evaluation of the Action Plan. In this regard, the Committee agreed to extend the duration of its planned sessions in September and December 2006 in order to provide members due time to review and discuss the evaluation notes prepared by OE on the Action Plan deliverables to be produced by IFAD management for submission to the Executive Board this year. The production of these evaluation notes in 2006, which were not part of the OE work programme, would cause a slight postponement of two country programme evaluations, although both would be completed as scheduled in 2007. While discussing this topic, the Committee noted IFAD management's concern that the proposed evaluation note concerning OE's comments on the annual progress report of management on implementation of the Action Plan may be more of a monitoring function that could be left to IFAD management.

15. Concerning the peer review on the performance of UNDP's central evaluation function, the Director, OE, informed participants about this initiative in which he served as one of the five external

reviewers focusing on issues related to the independence of UNDP's evaluation function. The Committee, which was provided with copies of the peer review report, expressed its appreciation regarding the useful role of the Director, OE, in this important exercise.

16. The Director, OE, then informed the Committee that OE and PMD had signed, on 7 April 2006, an agreement on the harmonization of self-evaluation and independent evaluation systems of IFAD. A copy of the agreement was shared with the participants at the meeting. The agreement will, *inter alia*, ensure that self-evaluation and independent evaluation systems generate comparable information for reporting to IFAD management and the Executive Board. The main aspects of harmonization concern the: (i) assessment criteria; (ii) rating scales; and (iii) timing of reports.

17. In addition to the above, the representative of Mexico conveyed the appreciation of his Government to the Evaluation Committee for the recent field visit to Mexico, which took place from 6 to 10 March 2006. He also took the opportunity to record the appreciation of the Mexican authorities to OE for its commendable efforts in organizing and contributing to the successful outcome of the Committee's field visit to Mexico.

18. In his final remarks, the Chairperson noted that this was the last session of the Committee with its current membership, and that a new membership would be established at the eighty-seventh session of the Executive Board from among the members of the Board elected by the Governing Council in February. He expressed his deep appreciation for the fruitful contributions provided by all Committee members to the work undertaken by the Committee during the past three years, and expressed also, on behalf of the Evaluation Committee, his gratitude for the excellent support provided by OE and PMD to the outgoing Committee members in all respects.

19. In closing, the Board is invited to take note of the issues raised and adopt the recommendations of the Committee as contained in this report.

