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Enabling the rural poor
to overcome poverty

Report of the Chairperson on the forty-fifth session of the Evaluation Committee

Executive Board — Eighty-ninth Session
Rome, 12-14 December 2006

For: **Approval**

Note to Executive Board Directors

This document is submitted for approval by the Executive Board.

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Recommendation for approval

The Board is invited to take note of the overall issues in this report and endorse the recommendations contained therein.

Report of the Chairperson on the forty-fifth session of the Evaluation Committee

1. The forty-fifth session of the Evaluation Committee met on 10 October 2006 and considered three agenda items: (a) the work programme and budget for 2007 of the Office of Evaluation (OE); (b) the annual report on results and impact of IFAD's operations (ARRI); and (c) other business. All Committee members except for India¹ and Nigeria participated in the session. Observers from Denmark and the United Kingdom were also present. In addition, various IFAD staff members attended the meeting, including the Assistant President, Programme Management Department (PMD), Director of OE, Executive Director of the Action Plan, Acting Secretary of IFAD and other staff.

Work programme and budget for 2007 of OE

2. The Committee discussed the OE work programme and budget document for 2007, and broadly agreed with the priorities and work programme and budget of OE for 2007, with the understanding that OE would provide the Committee the approach paper of the joint evaluation on Africa (see paragraph 6).
3. As requested by the Committee and the Executive Board during their respective sessions in September 2006, the Committee appreciated the specific measures taken by OE to reduce the increase in the 2007 budget. This budget which is noticeably higher than that of previous years has been reduced by around US\$500,000, as compared to the budget proposal presented to the Committee and Board in September 2006 bringing the overall budget increase proposal for 2007 to 11% (against 21% in the preview document of September). This reduction was achieved, *inter-alia*, by reducing the budget for the proposed joint evaluation with the African Development Bank (AfDB) on Africa (see paragraph 5). The Evaluation Committee noted that this would require OE accessing up to US\$200,000 in supplementary funds for the implementation of the joint evaluation, for which concrete pledges have been received.
4. As per the request of the Board during its eighty-eighth session, the Committee discussed and agreed with OE's proposal to drop altogether the undertaking of the evaluation of IFAD's Action Plan. Given the lack of consensus in the Board on the topic, the Committee recommends that the Board agree with the removal of the Action Plan evaluation from OE's work programme.
5. Moreover, the Committee took note and agreed with OE's proposal to defer, towards the end of 2007, the commencement of two new evaluations on: (a) IFAD's overall approaches and operations in Mesoamerica; and (b) IFAD's capacity and performance to promote replicable innovations for rural poverty reduction. With regard to the Committee's annual field visit next year, while a final decision on the topic will be taken during the Committee's forty-sixth session, one option would be for the Committee to attend the Mali country programme evaluation national roundtable workshop in the first part of 2007. The Committee took note that this evaluation will be completed as per the timeframe in the OE work programme for 2006, and discussed during its forty-sixth session.
6. While expressing their broad support towards the joint evaluation with AfDB on the two organizations' overall approaches and operations in agriculture and rural development in Africa, the Committee requested further information concerning the joint evaluation approach paper, which is being prepared and will be discussed with the AfDB in October. As another measure to reduce the overall costs, OE noted that the sampling of countries will be organised in such a manner to ensure that the joint

¹ The representative of India sent his written comments on the agenda items ahead of the meeting, which were shared with the participants.

evaluation benefits from the four country programme evaluations, which OE plans to undertake in Africa next year. Finally, on this issue, it was decided that OE would share the draft joint approach paper with the Committee before the December Board, and organize an appropriate consultation process with Committee members on this important topic.

7. Finally, the Committee took note that the 2007 OE budget includes, as decided by the Board during its eighty-eighth session, the implementation of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) recommendation in relation to the increase in OE General Service staff salaries.

Annual report on results and impact of IFAD operations (ARRI)

8. The Committee found the ARRI to be a very clear and useful report. It particularly appreciated the introduction of the target score for benchmarking purposes to illustrate how such a target rate can be used to track and improve performance. The Committee also found interesting the range of issues raised in the ARRI and made various useful suggestions for further improving the reader-friendliness of the ARRI, which OE will take into consideration in preparing the next ARRIs.
9. The Committee invited OE to exercise a differentiated judgement, reflecting the diversity of institutions, while assessing the overall performance of governments.
10. The Committee's attention was drawn to the need for IFAD to make concerted efforts towards improving project and programme sustainability, especially as this has been raised repeatedly in the past by the ARRIs and other evaluations. The Committee welcomes the ARRI's proposal for IFAD to organise a wider debate on the topic of sustainability in the near future.
11. Similarly, there was much discussion on project and programme-level monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems. It was noted that this is an area that IFAD has been grappling with for many years, and that ways and means need to be found to seriously enhance the performance of M&E systems together with other partners. This is fundamental, given the centrality of M&E systems, *inter-alia*, for project management, reporting, impact assessment and knowledge sharing. On another subject, the Committee recommended that, while it is important for IFAD to strengthen the involvement of NGOs in its operations, the Fund should devote sufficient resources towards the broader capacity building of NGOs in partner countries.
12. Among other issues, the Assistant President of PMD conveyed that the IFAD management found the report of high quality and a useful tool for accountability and learning purposes. He recalled that a written management response to the main issues and recommendations in the ARRI will be provided to the Committee and Board in December 2006, within the framework of the Portfolio Performance Report. He also informed the Committee that, in light of the importance of the ARRI, the management plans to organize in the near future an internal policy forum to engage a wider range of IFAD staff in discussing the ARRI.

Other business

13. Under this agenda item, as per the provisions contained in paragraph 47 of its terms of reference, the Committee decided that it would discuss the IFAD Supervision and Implementation Support Policy together with the comments of OE on the document at its forty-sixth session, before the same is considered by the Executive Board in December 2006. In this regard, the Chairman highlighted that OE has undertaken in recent years two corporate level evaluations on supervision issues, namely the evaluation of IFAD's supervision modalities in 2003 and the evaluation of the Direct Supervision Pilot Programme in 2005. The latter was discussed by the Executive Board in September 2005, which also adopted the evaluation's Agreement at Completion Point.

