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Enabling poor rural people
to overcome poverty

Report of the Evaluation Committee Chairperson on the field visit to the Philippines

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Report of the Evaluation Committee Chairperson on the field visit to the Philippines

1. **Background and objectives.** In line with its terms of reference, the Evaluation Committee undertook its annual field visit to the Philippines from 6 to 11 April 2008. All Committee members, except for Mali and Switzerland, took part in the field visit.¹ The Executive Board Director for Cameroon also participated in the visit. IFAD was represented by the Assistant President of the Programme Management Department (PMD), the Director of the Office of Evaluation, the Executive Director of the IFAD Action Plan, and other staff.
2. The objectives of the trip were to allow the Evaluation Committee to: (i) gain an appreciation of IFAD's development effectiveness on the ground; (ii) visit the IFAD-funded Cordillera Highland Agricultural Resource Management Project (CHARM) to hold discussions with beneficiaries and their groups, project staff, provincial government authorities and others, as well as to see first-hand project activities on the ground; and (iii) participate in a workshop in Manila with officials of the Government of the Philippines, the Asian Development Bank (AsDB) and others to discuss the main learning themes and issues emerging from the CHARM project evaluation that deserve specific attention in the second phase of the operation.
3. **Field visit.** The field visit was conducted from 6 to 9 April in the Cordillera Administrative Region of the Philippines, the implementation area of the CHARM project, which was cofinanced with AsDB.² The project was located in a very challenging environment: a mountainous area characterized by towering peaks, plateaus and intermittent patches of valleys, and prone to natural disasters such as typhoons and earthquakes. Over 90 per cent of the region's population is indigenous.
4. Before travelling to the Cordillera region, the Committee had the opportunity to hold discussions with the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, the Deputy Director-General of the National Economic Development Authority and other government officials in Manila. The Secretary designated his Undersecretary to accompany the Evaluation Committee throughout its field visit to the CHARM project.
5. The field visit provided an opportunity for the Committee to interact face to face with men and women from the targeted population, project authorities and other partners working at the grass-roots level. The discussions with the communities were organized in two rounds with three focus groups, namely, farmers, tribal elders and women. Various representative examples of project activities were visited, including irrigation schemes, farm-to-market roads and rice and vegetable production areas. The Committee also visited Bakun, a community that has established – with the assistance of the CHARM project – the first community land title for indigenous people in the country.
6. **Main issues from the field.** The field visit enabled the Committee members to familiarize themselves with the benefits accruing to the community from the project and provided an opportunity for the Committee and others to discuss a number of key issues emerging from the field visit. These issues included the importance of: (i) indigenous people and their processes for legal self-determination to establish

¹ The Executive Director of Switzerland cancelled his participation in the field visit due to unforeseen circumstances. At the time of the field visit, Mali had yet to designate their new Executive Director to IFAD, following the departure of their former representative to the Fund in February 2008.

² The Executive Board will consider for approval the second phase of the CHARM project at its current session.

communal land titles and policy dialogue for the recognition of indigenous knowledge systems and practices; (ii) investments in rice and vegetable production and post-harvest infrastructure to support improved market access; and (iii) the need for a clear exit strategy and the strengthening of local institutions and farmers' organizations to promote the sustainability of future IFAD projects and to introduce greater innovation, particularly with regard to income generation activities.

7. Committee members found the annual field visit informative and useful towards further enhancing their understanding of issues bearing on the design and implementation of IFAD-funded projects in remote and challenging areas.
8. **Learning workshop.** On 10 April, the Committee participated in a learning workshop based on the lessons from the CHARM project evaluation, which was organized jointly by the Government of the Philippines and IFAD's Office of Evaluation (OE) at the Department of Agriculture in Manila. In addition to Committee members, the workshop was attended by around 70 participants, including representatives of the Government, the project staff, international organizations, NGOs and farmers' organizations, as well as IFAD Management and staff. The Committee found the workshop to be well organized and conducive to open and in-depth discussions. They would like to thank the Government and OE for the arrangements made to facilitate the deliberations. However, the Committee suggests that for future field visits further consideration be given to how to make best use of this type of workshop.
9. To stimulate the discussion, an issues paper – the main background document for the workshop - was prepared by OE on the main themes emerging from the CHARM evaluation. The paper contained the following two themes:
 - **Theme 1:** What does sustainability mean in the context of IFAD-supported projects/programmes aimed at improved natural resource management and increased agricultural productivity in relatively fragile ecosystems, such as the uplands of Cordillera?
 - **Theme 2:** What are the key challenges for scaling up and replicating the innovations that emerged from the CHARM project and how should IFAD's capacity be strengthened to rise proactively to these challenges, for example through policy dialogue with the Government and other partners?
10. The workshop participants broke up into two working groups in the afternoon, with each group deliberating over one key theme, and providing feedback in the form of a PowerPoint presentation to the workshop plenary session.
11. **Specific issues and lessons learned from the workshop.** The Government of the Philippines and other workshop participants expressed broad consensus on the main findings and recommendations of the evaluation. With respect to theme 1 on sustainability, the discussion group concluded that IFAD interventions should:
 - (i) ensure a balance between economic, social and environmental objectives;
 - (ii) better incorporate indigenous knowledge in project design and implementation;
 - (iii) develop appropriate institutional arrangements in supporting indigenous people at the national, regional and local level; and
 - (iv) develop specific indicators to be monitored in assessing performance and sustainability of programmes and projects in support of indigenous peoples.
12. With respect to theme 2, the discussion group concluded that IFAD interventions should:
 - (i) ensure that cultural norms and relevance are considered in identifying and piloting innovations within indigenous communities in the Philippines;
 - (ii) enhance knowledge management, joint supervision missions and exchange visits so that they can make a greater contribution towards replication and scaling up of successful innovations tested at the project level; and
 - (iii) pursue a more consultative

design process and ensure more flexibility in project implementation; and (iv) use IFAD grants more strategically in promoting innovations.

13. In general, there is a need for: an exit strategy right from the start of the project; a mid-term review, combined with the flexibility to change the project design or implementation if necessary; and direct supervision by IFAD.
14. **Meeting with the President of the Republic of the Philippines.** On 11 April, the Committee was given the opportunity to pay a courtesy call on the President of the Philippines, Her Excellency Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo at the Malacañang Palace in Manila. The President expressed appreciation for IFAD's work in rural poverty alleviation in the Philippines. The Chairperson of the Evaluation Committee, the Assistant President, PMD and the Director, OE took the opportunity to share with the President key lessons from the CHARM project evaluation and their impressions of the field, as well as IFAD's future cooperation priorities in the country. Moreover, discussions were held on the impact of increasing commodity prices, particularly for rice, on the country and the need for the Government and partners such as IFAD to increase investments in the agricultural and rural sector.
15. **Meeting with the AsDB.** In the afternoon of 11 April, the Committee met with members of AsDB's Development Effectiveness Committee. Moreover, the Committee participated in discussions between AsDB and IFAD staff on ways and means to enhance partnership and synergy between the two organizations. Among the issues discussed was the decline in recent years in the number of projects jointly cofinanced by IFAD and AsDB. There was general recognition that this partnership should be reinvigorated in order to meet the objectives of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.
16. **Conclusion.** Overall, with regard to the field visit to the project area, the Committee felt that this had been a fruitful experience and a rich learning opportunity about IFAD and the Philippines. Some members who had participated in the previous field visits considered the trip to the Philippines as one of the best Evaluation Committee field visits so far. The preparation meetings held by OE were informative and helpful but there was room for improvement.
17. The dialogue with the beneficiaries in the field had been very constructive as it had been carried out in an open and interactive manner, however more information and better preparation would have enhanced the discussions.
18. Members also agreed that it had been a good opportunity to visit the AsDB, IFAD's partner institution. However, more information and better preparation on the part of both AsDB and IFAD would have been desirable.
19. Based on the Committee members' experiences of the field visit to the Philippines, the Evaluation Committee will hold a special session devoted to evaluating the field visit with the aims of: (i) defining the purpose of the field visit; (ii) identifying the role of the Committee, OE and IFAD Management in the visit; and (iii) providing guidance to OE in designing, planning and organizing future field visits. The Committee calls on OE and IFAD Management to evaluate their experience of the field visit. A discussion of the lessons learned by the Evaluation Committee, OE and Management will be organized so that they can consider together how to better prepare for the next field visit.

20. In closing, the Evaluation Committee and others who travelled to the Philippines would like to record their deepest appreciation for the excellent arrangements made and attention accorded to all participants during the annual field visit by the Government of the Philippines, during both the visit to the Cordillera region and the workshop in Manila. The discussions with the various stakeholders, beneficiaries, project authorities, partner organizations and government representatives were very informative and useful. The meetings with the President of the Philippines, the Secretary of Agriculture and the Undersecretary of Agriculture and others had afforded Committee members a rare insight into the perspectives and priorities of the Government of the Philippines with respect to rural and agricultural development in the country.

