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Enabling poor rural people
to overcome poverty

Annual Report on Quality Assurance in IFAD's Projects and Programmes

Executive Board — Ninety-fifth Session
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For: **Review**

Note to Executive Board Directors

This document is submitted for review by the Executive Board.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

ARRI	Annual Report on the Results and Impact of IFAD Operations
COSOP	country strategic opportunities programme
CPM	country programme manager
KSF	key success factors
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MAT	management assessment template
OE	Office of Evaluation
OSC	Operational Strategy and Policy Guidance Committee
PMD	Programme Management Department
QA	quality assurance
QE	quality enhancement
RIMS	Results and Impact Management System
RMF	Results Measurement Framework
RRN	reviewer recommendation note
TRC	Technical Review Committee

Annual Report on Quality Assurance in IFAD's Projects and Programmes

I. Introduction

1. This first annual report on quality assurance in IFAD's projects and programmes is divided into four sections. This section provides a brief outline of the quality assurance (QA) process adopted by Management as the final step in IFAD's recently introduced quality enhancement (QE) system. Additional details on this new process are provided in annex I. Overall results from the QA review of 30 operations in 2008 are presented in section II. Section III contains an assessment of this year's quality-at-entry ratings, based on the use of Results Measurement Framework (RMF) indicators. Section IV identifies a range of design issues emerging from the QA process that will be addressed in 2009, though given the time frame for project preparation the results are unlikely to be noticeable before 2010.
2. Based on the recommendations of the September 2005 report on the Independent External Evaluation of IFAD, the Action Plan committed IFAD to strengthening its internal QE procedures and to ensuring that projects financed by loans and grants are grounded in the best knowledge of critical issues for rural poverty reduction.¹ As part of the effort to enhance the quality of operations, IFAD has recently strengthened its quality enhancement procedures and review. This includes the introduction of key success factors (KSFs) and the management assessment template, and streamlining the Technical Review Committee (TRC). Complementary to the improved QE process and at arms length from the Programme Management Department (PMD), the established QA process entails the review of project design by the Office of the Vice-President as a final step before loan negotiations and submission to the Executive Board.²
3. QA reviews take place three times a year (February, June and October), with each review spanning approximately two weeks. To simplify the process, keep costs down and ensure that IFAD is able to recruit high quality experts, the QA process is drawing on reviewers located in Rome as well as experts from around the world who participate in the process over the telephone. This has proven to be an effective, low-cost approach, and the intention is to continue along these lines next year. To date, a total of eight reviewers have participated in the process (see annex II). These reviewers were formerly in senior management positions and have between 20 and 40 years of experience working on project development and implementation in developing countries for United Nations agencies, the World Bank and bilateral aid agencies. They have been recruited on the basis of their extensive experience working in the project countries and their language abilities, as many project documents are in French and Spanish as well as English. At present, there is only one female reviewer and two reviewers from developing countries in Africa and Latin America. For future QA sessions, the aim is to increase the number of women reviewers and those from developing countries.
4. Another lesson learned from this year's exercise is that limiting reviews to three times a year does not leave enough time to cover all projects, especially those scheduled for September and December Executive Board review. A rolling process has therefore been adopted whereby, in addition to the three annual reviews, projects can be submitted for a QA review whenever they are ready. This year a

¹ IFAD's Quality Enhancement for Project Design – Guidelines for internal project review, Programme Management Department (PMD), December 2007.

² IFAD's Quality Assurance – Guidelines for QA function and process, December 2007.

total of five projects were subjected to the rolling reviews, and the number is expected to increase in 2009.

II. Overall quality assurance results in 2008

5. A total of 30 projects (see annex II for details) were submitted to three separate QA sessions this year. Three projects were reviewed in the February session, eleven in the June session and eleven during the October session. Five projects underwent QA review in the intervening months. Of the five, one project was deemed too immature for a QA review and was sent back to QE. A summary of results in 2008 is provided below:

Table 1
2008 QA review results

<i>Final project categories</i>	<i>Number of projects</i>	<i>Percentage of cohort</i>
• Project judged ready to proceed with minor changes	9	30
• Projects judged ready to proceed subject to additional assurances during loan negotiations and/or further modifications/reviews during implementation	18	60
• Projects requiring substantive changes entailing delay in presentation to Executive Board	3	10
• Projects dropped from the lending programme because of inappropriate design	0	0

6. As the above results show, a third of the projects were found to have sound design and required only minor design/presentational changes before proceeding to loan negotiations and Executive Board review. Two thirds of the projects were considered essentially sound, with issues identified and recommendations made as follows:
- Additional assurances to be sought during loan negotiations;
 - Specific actions to be undertaken during the first year of implementation; and
 - Additional reviews/assessments to address design aspects to be undertaken during the first two years of implementation or as part of the midterm review.

These results indicate that, by and large, the QE process is having the desired effect on project quality.

7. Three projects were found to have design flaws such that additional investigation and simplification of design were needed before they were ready to proceed for Executive Board consideration. Additional field work was carried out in the cases of the Niger and the Democratic Republic of the Congo with the design being modified in line with the QA recommendations. Following the additional design activities, the project in the Niger adopted a model pursued by the World Bank and an arrangement whereby the IFAD and the World Bank projects will be implemented in parallel, while the project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was simplified and a number of components eliminated. Both projects were resubmitted for QA review and were found ready to proceed to negotiations and submission to the December session of the Executive Board.
8. A third project in India was judged too deficient in project design to undergo a QA review for submission to the December session. As a result, it was sent back for an additional QE review or extended country programme management team review to assess its design maturity prior to undergoing a QA review for submission to the April session of the Executive Board.

9. Given the intensive QE reviews prior to project submission for QA review, it is not surprising that no project in this year's cohort was dropped from the lending programme. However, the emerging practice of presenting projects for QE review at the preliminary stages of design may increase the number of projects sent back for additional QE reviews.

Fragile states

10. Many of the projects this year are located in fragile states or in underdeveloped and often neglected regions of Member States, and thus respond well to IFAD's overarching objective of poverty alleviation. Their strong relevance translates into potentially high rewards but also entails a considerable risk that development objectives may not be achieved. Considering IFAD's strategic objectives, however, these are acceptable risks. Notwithstanding the high relevance of these projects, having an ex ante assessment of their likelihood to achieve the stated development objectives would permit channelling additional attention and resources to those found to be especially risky. To this end, in addition to the QA review's focus on the quality of design, reviewers also provided their best assessment of the likelihood of each project meeting its development objectives.³
11. Based on the reviewers' expectations, 23 projects are likely to achieve their development objectives, resulting in an overall 77 per cent satisfactory outcome. These ex ante predictions are slightly lower than the Office of Evaluation's (OE) 2002-2007⁴ ex post effectiveness evaluation findings of 83 per cent effectiveness (defined by OE as having achieved the specific objectives of the project).⁵

Complex project design

12. A frequently voiced critical observation by QA reviewers concerns complex project design and overly ambitious objectives in relation to country conditions and implementation capacity. This parallels closely OE's comment that "IFAD-supported projects in fragile states tend to be insufficiently differentiated, overambitious, overdesigned, and under-supported during implementation. Political/economic analysis is either limited or ignored."⁶ Complex design based on a one-size-fits-all approach demonstrably added unwarranted risks to final outcomes in past IFAD projects. This contributed to OE's findings regarding the level of sustainability of IFAD projects. The latest ARRI showed that 48 per cent of projects evaluated by OE that were closed during the 2002-2007 period were sustainable, but also noted a steady improvement in sustainability ratings over the past two years, with 53 per cent of projects evaluated in 2006 rated as satisfactory, increasing to 67 per cent in 2007. However, projects currently at the design stage need to give more careful consideration to issues related to complexity and sustainability. Close attention will be paid to these questions in upcoming QE and QA reviews.

Effectiveness of the QE process

13. Drawing on the QA findings, it is possible to measure the effectiveness of the QE process. On balance, there are clear indications that QE is having a positive impact on the quality of design and provides effective support to design teams. Technical aspects in particular appear to be receiving adequate attention during these reviews, as do aspects related to poverty, gender, targeting and the environment. Less satisfactory aspects of QE identified by this year's QA reviews include:

³ Using a similar approach for predicting outcomes during quality-at-entry assessments the World Bank's Quality Assurance Group compared them with the Bank's Independent Evaluation Group's exit assessments and found the panelists to be correct in about 90 per cent of the cases.

⁴ Effectiveness evaluation by OE is the closest indicator available to compare with development outcome ratings used here and by the World Bank's Independent Evaluation Group.

⁵ Table 8 derived from EC 2008/53/W.P.2, Annual Report on Results and Impact of IFAD Operations evaluated in 2007.

⁶ Box.8 derived from EC 2008/53/W.P.2, Annual Report on Results and Impact of IFAD Operations evaluated in 2007.

- (a) Recommendations advanced by the reviewers, which are frequently too general and not prescriptive enough, should be more precise and give the design team a clearer idea of what needs to be done;
- (b) There is too much emphasis on compliance with IFAD's policies and technical aspects and not enough on the appropriateness of the proposed overall approach, implementation arrangements, project complexity, synergy between the different components, mobilizing the private sector and the likelihood of achieving development objectives;
- (c) On a number of occasions the design team has added a component or introduced major changes to the project approach without subjecting them to a QE review;
- (d) At least three projects were subjected to a QE review at the concept stage, before the project details were fully articulated, thus seriously limiting the usefulness of the panel's review and recommendations;
- (e) When QE recommendations entail major additional field investigations, due to budgetary constraints there is a tendency to delay the additional work to the implementation phase or at times to simply ignore the recommendations; and
- (f) There is excessive emphasis on compliance with IFAD's KSFs.

III. Quality-at-entry ratings

14. As part of the QA process, each project was also assessed by the reviewer based on four RMF indicators. The findings, which are presented in table 2, show all quality-at-entry ratings for the four RMF indicators to be moderately satisfactory overall. At the individual project level, 80 per cent of all the projects were rated at least moderately satisfactory or better but six projects exhibit below-the-line ratings. Given the small sample size, it is too early to pass a definitive judgment on the utility of this instrument. However, a preliminary assessment shows that although these RMF indicators provide good insight into project compliance with IFAD's strategic objectives, they are not providing a robust indication of expected development outcomes and sustainability. At the time these quality-at-entry ratings based on RMF indicators were introduced in the QA guidelines, it was agreed that their effectiveness would be assessed. The review presently under way may result in some further refinements that will be reported to the Executive Board in next year's report.

Table 2
Quality-at-entry ratings

<i>RMF indicators</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Average rating</i>	<i>Satisfactory or better ratings^a (percentage)</i>
RMF 1	Effectiveness of thematic areas	4.5	87
RMF 2	Projected impact on poverty measures	4.6	87
RMF 3	Innovation, learning, and scaling up	4.4	83
RMF 4	Sustainability of benefits	4.4	80
Overall rating		4.5	80

^a The quality-at-entry ratings are based on a scale of 1-6, where 1 is highly unsatisfactory and 6 is highly satisfactory. The percentage indicates the number of projects receiving a rating of 4 or better out of the total number of projects.

IV. Design aspects with scope for improvement

15. Despite the favourable findings emerging from this year's review, there are a number of design aspects with scope for further improvement. Close attention will be paid to these aspects, which are presented below, during the QE and QA processes next year.
16. **Strategic aspects of project design.** Strategic issues such as institutional arrangements, project complexity and strategies for mobilizing the private sector were perceived as aspects in need of strengthening. While these aspects are bound to improve following the introduction of results-based country strategic opportunities programmes (COSOPs) and more intensive QE review, more needs to be done, especially as weaknesses in these areas are having an impact on project sustainability. A good example of a QE review addressing strategic aspects of project design is that of the Agricultural Sector Development Programme in the United Republic of Tanzania. As a result of the QE review, the project design underwent radical changes and the final product was readily endorsed by QA as a feasible and viable design. The experience in the United Republic of Tanzania highlighted the importance of addressing strategic design aspects for projects being cofinanced with other donors who may have a somewhat different agenda.
17. **Project complexity.** As mentioned previously, a common concern expressed by the QA reviewers (frequently echoing issues identified during the QE review) relates to project complexity and overly ambitious objectives in relation to implementation capacity and country conditions. Complexity is frequently seen in the large number of components and subcomponents, the adoption of a value chain approach that requires considerable up-front analytical assessment, and reverting back to the now somewhat discredited integrated rural development approach. As these shortcomings are related to long-term project sustainability, close attention will be paid to them during the QE and QA processes.
18. **Logical frameworks and development outcomes.** All IFAD-funded projects include a logical framework but few of them include clear development objectives and the corresponding final and intermediate outcome indicators to track progress towards achieving the objectives, including those relating to IFAD's pro-poor and gender agenda. The QE and QA processes, and the final evaluation of projects by OE, would be more useful if the design were to include a clearer definition of development outcomes and the intermediate and final indicators to be used to measure the degree to which such outcomes are being achieved. It is proposed that the use of development outcomes and related indicators be adopted next year, and staff training will be provided in logical framework preparation and use. As indicated, this should also help identify risky projects in need of special attention during implementation.
19. **Monitoring and evaluation.** Shortcomings in the use of logical frameworks were noted in connection with arrangements for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) that failed to garner borrower support (in part no doubt because they were not properly linked to a national M&E system). In the absence of such a system and indicators, it will be difficult for staff and managers to attend to the need for corrective measures during implementation. Our reviews also highlighted many instances where the baseline data and Results and Impact Measurement System (RIMS) indicators are not available at entry and consequently must be collected during implementation. Not only does this limit the QA review's ability to assess the soundness of the stated objectives and the likelihood of achieving them, but such delays limit the capacity of the implementing authorities to monitor and assess progress towards meeting the development objectives.
20. **Private-sector engagement.** Several projects this year display a persistent weakness in identifying and defining workable approaches to income-generating/entrepreneurial components, mobilizing the private sector to

play a meaningful role, and forging public-private partnerships. While these projects attempt to adopt a public-private partnerships approach, including the use of value chains, the ways of achieving these objectives require further refinement and analysis. There is also a need to make more effective use of strategies for active private-sector participation in pro-poor activities. In the coming months, PMD will examine in some detail a few examples of successful private-sector interventions by other donors. These include the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise Project being funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Cambodia, the Katalyst programme being financed by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) and other donors in Bangladesh, and the as yet unproven Small Agribusiness Development Initiative being funded by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) in Indonesia. These projects exemplify the level of effort involved in taking a strategic approach to mobilizing the private sector. Based on this review, a more robust approach will be defined in future operations.

21. **Institutional arrangements.** In an effort to enhance the prospects for successful outcomes, several projects in this year's cohort are assigning the overall coordination of project activities to ministries other than agriculture (e.g. ministries of health, internal and external security, land registration), either in response to a government decision or because these agencies have stronger implementation capacity than the agriculture ministry. By adopting such a flexible approach to the selection of an implementing agency for these projects, IFAD is enhancing the prospects for quick and smooth implementation. At the same time, consideration must be given to long-term sustainability once the project is completed and the implementing agency is no longer involved in the activities. In designing future projects, closer attention will be paid to sustainability in general, and to the impact of institutional arrangements on sustainability in particular. An associated issue is institutional capacity assessment. More needs to be done at the project design stage to assess the capacity of implementation agencies and come up with feasible corrective measures to build their capacity. Particularly close attention will be given to this question in upcoming QA reviews.
22. **Capacity-building.** As stated earlier, many of IFAD's projects are located in fragile states and/or less-favoured regions where implementation capacity is particularly weak. Institution-building is therefore a crucial aspect of these projects, but QA reviews have found capacity-building efforts to be lacking at times. An important factor here is that in the interest of sound implementation, preference is frequently given to private-sector providers as the main implementation agents. While this helps to build private-sector capacity, it does not provide the necessary assistance to government agencies. There is clearly scope here for improving the capacity-building strategies of projects, and increased attention will be given to this issue in upcoming QA reviews.
23. **Procurement and financial management.** Although there is general agreement that timely and proper formulation of procurement and financial management aspects would help accelerate implementation, much of the relevant design and planning is not done until the first year of implementation. Since reducing implementation delays would be beneficial to our clients and would also serve IFAD's purposes, every effort will be made to advance the preparation of these aspects during the coming year.
24. **Governance and anticorruption.** Contrary to emerging practice at the World Bank and regional development banks, where increasing attention is being paid to governance and combating corruption, limited attention is given to these issues during the design of IFAD-funded projects. Stronger measures will be taken where necessary to support projects in countries where there is an increased risk of corruption.

25. **Risk assessment.** Under current practice, risks are regarded as the robustness of the economic rate of return to shortfalls in benefits or increases in costs, with a focus on estimating and reflecting the potential impact of delays, cost overruns and returns below those projected. The focus is thus on improving the reliability of rates of return estimates rather than risk mitigation. What is required, however, is a broadening of the risk analysis to include risks associated with policy failures, political uncertainties, limited implementation capacity, and policy constraints that require different approaches and a focus on appropriate ex ante and ex post mitigation measures that should be identified during project preparation and implementation.
26. **Supervision arrangements.** For a number of projects, the QA review recommended the preparation of a detailed supervision plan for the first two years of implementation that would outline arrangements for coordinating supervision with all partners and ensure adequate resources to permit close and continuous supervision. Such supervision plans address the aforementioned issues related to project complexity, institutional arrangements and projects in fragile states by improving coordination among implementing agencies. They also address IFAD's heavy reliance on service providers and NGOs when designing strategies to promote private-sector involvement in project activities. Given the predominance of this approach, it would be useful to assess the different arrangements and the adequacy of supervision oversight over these providers, and to identify best practices that could be shared with country programme managers. An important aspect to keep in mind is that the limited supervision budget makes it essential to carefully plan mission composition and timing.
27. **Project design reports.** There is considerable scope for streamlining these documents further. They remain very uneven in quality and are presently being prepared to conform to the KSFs. While the current practice serves well IFAD's purposes of ensuring compliance to IFAD policies, it does not serve the needs of practitioners in the field who are ultimately responsible for implementing the project. PMD is currently in the process of revising the project design report outline to reduce the length of the report, eliminate repetition and provide (in supporting annexes) sufficient information to indicate what needs to be done and how the implementers are expected to proceed. These changes will also reduce the number and length of working papers.

Quality assurance process

I. Background

1. Based on the recommendations of the September 2005 report on the Independent External Evaluation (IEE) of IFAD, the Action Plan committed IFAD to strengthening its internal quality enhancement (QE) procedures and ensuring that the grants and loan-financed projects are grounded in the best knowledge of critical issues for rural poverty reduction. The IEE concluded in 2005 that IFAD projects are both under- and overdesigned. Major design weaknesses included aspects such as effectiveness of targeting, sustainability, and institutional analysis and implementation arrangements. Overdesign weaknesses included document length and complexity.¹
2. As part of the effort to enhance the quality of operations, IFAD has recently strengthened its QE procedures and review. This includes the introduction of the KSFs and the management assessment template (MAT), and streamlining the Technical Review Committee (TRC). Complementary to the improved QE process and at arms length from the Programme Management Department, the established QA process entails the review of project design by the Office of the Vice-President as a final step before loan negotiations and submission to the Executive Board.² The QA function and process took effect as of 2 January 2008. Three QA sessions have taken place in 2008, during which 30 projects have been reviewed.
3. The QA review process, which is managed by the Vice-President, has three main objectives:
 - (a) **Clear designed projects for loan negotiations and submission to Executive Board.** The review assesses to what extent the recommendations by the Quality Enhancement Panel have been addressed, examines the six KSF domain maturity ratings and identifies any residual issues that may have to be addressed. Specific measures to be undertaken during loan negotiations or during implementation are identified and recommended. Upon this basis, the QA review determines whether a project should proceed to negotiations and Executive Board submission. Projects fall into one of the following four categories:
 - (i) Proceed as is with minor changes;
 - (ii) Proceed subject to addressing the recommendations during negotiations or during implementation;
 - (iii) Board presentation delayed to address outstanding issues; and
 - (iv) Outstanding issues are sufficiently serious to justify dropping the project.
 - (b) **Determine the quality-at-entry rating for results indicators under IFAD's corporate RMF.** Based on the draft appraisal report submitted to the QA session, the review rates the following four aspects
 - (i) Projected effectiveness of thematic areas of engagement;
 - (ii) Projected poverty impact;

¹ IFAD's Quality Enhancement for Project Design – Guidelines for internal project review, PMD, December 2007.

² IFAD's Quality Assurance – Guidelines for QA function and process, December 2007.

- (iii) Innovation, learning and scaling up;
 - (iv) Sustainability of benefits.
- (c) **Evaluate the quality enhancement process.** The Office of the Vice-President, as part of its QA function, also reviews and assesses the robustness of the QE process.
4. In addition, each project review also assesses the appropriateness of project design vis-à-vis IFAD's policy and guidance documents, e.g. IFAD Strategic Framework 2007-2010, Rural Finance Policy, IFAD Policy on Targeting, Framework for Gender Mainstreaming in Operations.

II. QA review process

5. The IFAD project cycle is divided into six phases: (i) inception, (ii) formulation, (iii) appraisal, (iv) negotiation and approval, (v) implementation, and (vi) evaluation. The inception phase is the first step towards formal inclusion in the project pipeline. In this phase, a project proposal, based on the strategy outlined in the COSOP, is drawn up. During the formulation phases a detailed technical design is undertaken for the project. IFAD and the government then review the technical feasibility of the proposal and examine policy considerations. At the appraisal phase, the project design is fine-tuned and project components and implementation arrangements are finalized. Loan negotiations are undertaken between IFAD and the borrower using the project appraisal report as the basis for the financing, loan and/or grant agreement. IFAD's Executive Board then reviews and – if it so deems – approves the IFAD financing. Implementation starts once the borrower has fulfilled specified conditions, allowing IFAD to declare the loan/grant effective. Each year some 10-12 completed projects are evaluated by the Office of Evaluation, which is an independent office that reports directly to IFAD's Executive Board.

IFAD's previous project review system

6. Prior to the introduction of the QE system in 2007, there were three management review mechanisms for quality control during design – the Project Development Team (PDT), the TRC and the Operational Strategy and Policy Guidance Committee (OSC). Established at the initial stage of delivery of the project inception report, the PDT provided peer support with in-house experts. Lack of sufficient staff time and a limited range of knowledge within IFAD resulted in the PDT becoming a "rubber stamping" exercise, particularly as these reviews were scheduled just prior to a TRC. The TRC review of the formulation report by the Technical Advisory Division was predominantly an internal review with interaction among division staff and exchanges with a country programme manager, the PDT or the Assistant President, PMD. TRC recommendations were often not taken into account due to limited budget or time before the submission date to the Executive Board. Finally, the OSC provided strategy and policy guidance for the further processing of proposed projects and programmes. Since the OSC was held shortly after the TRC, it often repeated the technical issues raised by the TRC. The OSC always approved the project for appraisal, usually with a list of issues and concerns to be addressed during appraisal. It was unusual for the OSC to identify new issues and it did not provide a systematic quality check.

Quality enhancement system

7. Under the new QE system, at inception the results-based COSOPs are reviewed and approved by the OSC, chaired by the President. The OSC ensures that the country strategy is in line with policies and strategic objectives of IFAD and the country. The TRC review has been replaced by the Quality Enhancement Review conducted by the QE Panel, which is composed of two internal and two external technical experts. The QE Panel assesses the formulation report by performing a desk review of project documents and produces the reviewer recommendation note (RRN). During the QE review meeting, the country programme manager (CPM) and panellists

discuss matters which require clarification and which the CPM sought advice upon. From discussions during this meeting, a QE Panel report is prepared which provides feedback and recommendations which the CPM and director comment upon stating their agreement/ disagreement. The CPM is expected to address the recommendations presented in the QE Panel report during appraisal. The Division Director concerned is tasked with ensuring compliance by the CPM in following up on the recommendations, before the project is sent on for the final QA review in the Vice-President's Office.

Quality assurance review

8. Providing the final quality checks on the appraisal report, the QA review is the final stage in the overall quality enhancement system before a project proceeds to loan negotiations and then the Executive Board for approval. Table 1 below outlines the different steps involved in the two-week QA review.

Procedures in the quality assurance process

<i>Steps</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Actors</i>	<i>Timing</i>
Step 1	Submission of project documents	CPM	4 weeks before QA (12 weeks before the Executive Board)
Step 2	Questions from reviewer and CPM's written response	Reviewer	1 week before QA
Step 3	1st QA meeting: – Discuss questions and answers and potential recommendations	Reviewer, CPM	During 1 st week of QA
Step 4	Draft recommendations submitted	Reviewer	1 day after 1 st meeting
Step 5	CPM comments on draft recommendations (agree/disagree)	CPM	2 days after 1 st meeting
Step 6	Meeting between VP and lead reviewer – Discuss recommendations and CPM response – Discuss whether to proceed to the Executive Board	Lead reviewer and VP	Beginning of the 2 nd week of QA
Step 7	2nd QA meeting: – Discuss recommendations CPM disagreed with – Suggest changes to recommendations	CPM, VP, director, reviewer, AP/PMD	During 2 nd week of QA
Step 8	Finalize QA recommendations and ratings	Reviewer	Day after 2 nd meeting
Step 9	VP endorses recommendations	VP	Friday of 2 nd week of QA
Step 10	Wrap-up session – Discuss project design, IFAD policy issues that arise during the QA process – CPMs provide feedback on the process	VP, AP/PMD, directors, CPMs	Friday of 2 nd week of QA

Note: AP: Assistant President; VP: Vice-President

9. Typically, there is at least a three-month interval between the QE and QA reviews during which time the CPM performs a mission and additional studies. Four weeks prior to the QA review, CPMs submit the project documents which includes: the appraisal report, all working papers, the compliance note, the QE Panel report, the RRN, the MAT, the COSOP, and any evaluation reports or supervision reports on related projects.
10. The external QA reviewer performs a desk review of these project documents and assesses whether the issues raised by the QE Panel have been adequately addressed, if there are any additional issues, and if the project will be able to

achieve its development objectives based on the institutional and supervision arrangements provided. Based on this desk review, the QA reviewer prepares a list of discussion questions for the CPM. The CPM provides a brief written response to these questions prior to the first QA meeting between the QA reviewer and CPM.

11. During the first QA meeting, any questions which require further clarification are discussed as well as other issues that may arise during the meeting. Based on the discussions, the QA reviewer prepares a set of recommendations which are shared with the CPM. The CPM is asked to agree/disagree with those recommendations. These recommendations are also shared with the lawyer and loan officer assigned to the country to ensure the feasibility of the recommendations. The recommendations with the comments of the CPM, lawyer and loan officer serve as the basis of the second QA meeting.
12. Prior to this meeting, the Vice-President reviews the initial questions with their responses and the recommendations with the CPM's comments and meets with the reviewer to raise additional issues and provide his or her views on the recommendations. The final QA meeting involves principally the Vice-President, CPM, director, Assistant President/PMD but also may include the lead adviser from the QE review as well as the relevant lawyer or loan officer. During this meeting, the recommendations to which the CPM disagreed are mainly discussed as well as any other issues that may have arisen after the initial meeting. Agreement on the recommendations is sought and means by which they can be achieved are discussed. Based on the discussion in this meeting, the final QA minutes are prepared stating the recommendations the CPM agreed to address and whether the project is cleared to proceed to loan negotiations and the Executive Board. These minutes are signed by the Vice-President and guide the loan negotiations.
13. At the conclusion of the QA session, a wrap-up meeting is held chaired by the Vice-President involving the CPMs, directors and Assistant President/PMD who participated in the QA review to discuss the policy and strategic issues that emerged from the QA reviews as well as any recommendations on how to improve the QE and QA reviews. These issues are documented and shared with the participants prior to the meeting which results in productive discussions on feasible next steps. Thus, these wrap-up meetings serve as an effective feedback loop to PMD on how to improve project design.
14. One year after effectiveness, the CPMs are expected to report on progress made in implementing the QA recommendations. The QA secretariat is responsible for reviewing the progress report and ensuring that the QA recommendations have been adequately addressed. This step is essential to ensure compliance and assess the efficacy and relevance of the QA review.

List of QA projects and reviewers

Table 1
Projects by QA session

	Country	Project title	CPM
February session			
1	Cape Verde	Rural Poverty Alleviation Programme (PLPR)	Mohamed Manssouri
2	Indonesia	National Programme for Community Empowerment in Rural Areas Project	Youqiong Wang
3	Mauritius	Marine and Agricultural Resources Support Programme	Abla Benhammouche
June session			
1	Albania	Mountain to Markets Project	Henning Pedersen
2	Cameroon	Rural Microfinance Development Support Project	Abdoul Barry
3	Congo	Rural Development Project in the Likouala, Pool and Sangha Departments	Luyaku Nsimpati
4	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Integrated Agricultural Rehabilitation Programme in Maniema Province	Leopold Sarr
5	Madagascar	Support to Farmer's Professional Organizations and Agricultural Services Project	Benoit Thierry
6	Moldova	Rural Financial Services and Marketing Programme	Pietro Turilli
7	Mozambique	Rural Markets Promotion Programme	Alessandro Marini
8	Niger	Agricultural and Rural Rehabilitation and Development Initiative – Institutional Strengthening Component (ARRDI-ISC)	Hubert Boirard
9	Rwanda	Kirehe Community-based Watershed Management Project	Claus Reiner
10	Senegal	Agricultural Value Chains Support Project	Sylvie Marzin
11	Sudan	Southern Sudan Livelihoods Development Project	Rasha Omar
October session			
1	Belize	Rural Finance Programme	Marco Camagni
2	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Rural Livelihoods Development Project	Abdelaziz Merzouk
3	China	Dabieshan Area Poverty Reduction Programme	Thomas Rath
4	Ecuador	Ibarra-San Lorenzo Development Project	Ximena Flores
5	Ghana	Rural and Agricultural Finance Programme	Mohamad Manssouri
6	Guatemala	Sustainable Rural Development Programme for the Northern Region	Enrique Murguia
7	Mauritania	Value Chain Development Programme for Poverty Reduction	Cristiana Sparacino
8	Mexico	Community-based Forestry Development Project in Southern States (Campeche, Chiapas and Oaxaca)	Ladislao Rubio
9	Philippines	Rapid Food Production Enhancement Programme	Sana Jatta
10	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Orinoco Delta Warao Support Programme	Francisco Pichón
11	Viet Nam	Pro-Poor Partnerships for Agroforestry Development	Atsuko Toda
Interim reviews			
1	India	Convergence of Agricultural Interventions in Maharashtra Programme	Mattia Prayer-Galletti
2	Lao People's Democratic Republic	Sustainable Natural Resource Management and Productivity Enhancement Project	Atsuko Toda
3	Swaziland	Rural Finance and Enterprise Development Programme	Louise McDonald
4	Tajikistan	Khatlon Livelihoods Support Project	Nigel Brett
5	United Republic of Tanzania	Agricultural Sector Development Programme	Samuel Ermerie
Total number of projects			30

Table 2
List of QA reviewers

<i>QA reviewers</i>	<i>Project reviewed</i>
Amnon Golan	Albania, China, India, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Cape Verde and Mauritius, Moldova, Sudan, Swaziland, Tajikistan, United Republic of Tanzania, Viet Nam
Arna Hartmann	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Congo, Mauritania, Niger
David Forbes-Watt	Cape Verde, Indonesia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Rwanda
Magid Slama	Belize, Cameroon, Ghana, Madagascar, Philippines
Mark Wilson	Senegal
Rory O'Sullivan	Democratic Republic of the Congo
Paolo Lucani	Ecuador, Guatemala
Carlos Elbirt	Mexico, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)