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Enabling poor rural people
to overcome poverty

Report of the chairperson on the fifty-seventh session of the Evaluation Committee

Executive Board — Ninety-seventh Session
Rome, 14-15 September 2009

For: **Approval**

Note to Executive Board Directors

This document is submitted for the approval of the Executive Board.

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Recommendation for approval

The Executive Board is invited to approve the recommendations contained in the report of the chairperson on the fifty-seventh session of the Evaluation Committee.

Report of the Chairperson on the fifty-seventh session of the Evaluation Committee

1. This report covers the deliberations of the Evaluation Committee during its fifty-seventh session, held on 20 and 21 July 2009. The five agenda items for discussion were: (a) the peer review of the Office of Evaluation (OE); (b) Completion evaluation of the Rural Development Project for the North-Eastern Provinces in Argentina (PRODERNEA); (c) Preview of OE's three-year rolling work programme for 2010-2012 and resource issues for 2010; (d) the President's Report on the Implementation Status of Evaluation Recommendations and Management Actions (PRISMA), together with OE comments; (e) IFAD's Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples, together with OE comments; and (f) other business.
2. All Committee members (Brazil, Canada, Egypt, Indonesia, Ireland, the Netherlands, Nigeria and Sweden) with the exception of India attended the session. Observers were present from Guatemala, Mexico, Qatar, the United Kingdom and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The Committee was joined by the Assistant President, Programme Management Department; the Assistant President, External Affairs Department; the Director, OE; the Secretary of IFAD; the Director, Latin America and the Caribbean Division; and other IFAD staff.

A. Peer review of the Office of Evaluation

3. The Committee considered the draft approach paper and terms of reference for the peer review of OE and IFAD's evaluation function. Representatives of the Evaluation Cooperation Group (ECG) of the multilateral banks¹ attended the meeting to present said document and provide the Committee with further clarification and information.
4. The Committee provided a number of comments and proposals on the approach paper and terms of reference, which will be reflected by the ECG representatives in a revised version of the paper. This document will be submitted to the Executive Board for consideration at its September 2009 session. The Evaluation Committee decided to discuss the revised text in an additional formal session on 4 September 2009. The Committee's comments are outlined below, broadly grouped into five issues.
5. **Roles, objectives and outputs of the peer review.** The Committee emphasized that the objectives and expected outputs of the peer review needed further clarification, underlining that due attention should be devoted to assessing the IFAD Evaluation Policy as this provides the overarching framework for the activities of OE. Members also highlighted that the approach paper needed to define the role and engagement of the Committee more explicitly throughout the peer review process. Likewise, the role of OE needed greater definition, given that it would have the main responsibility for providing information and documents to facilitate the task of the peer reviewers.
6. **Cost-effectiveness of the evaluation function.** The Committee requested that the peer review consider the cost-effectiveness and the "value for money" of OE's work, and emphasized the importance of comparing IFAD's evaluation function with that of other institutions, taking into account IFAD's hybrid nature as both international financial institution (IFI) and United Nations specialized agency. The need for greater detail in the peer review budget was also underlined by the participants.

¹ Mr Fredrik Korfker, Chief Evaluator, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and ECG Vice Chairman; and Mr Bruce Murray, proposed chair of the ECG Peer Review Panel.

7. **Peer Review Panel composition.** The Committee expressed satisfaction with the proposed composition of the Peer Review Panel, and encouraged the ECG to identify consultants experienced in agriculture to support the work of the panel. The Committee advised that recruitment could proceed once the revised approach paper and terms of reference had been considered by the Executive Board in September 2009.
8. **Field visits.** In addition, the Committee took note that selected country visits would be undertaken during the process, to capture the perspectives and inputs of a wider set of stakeholders.
9. **Peer review timeline.** The Evaluation Committee discussed the timeline for the peer review and suggested that adequate time be allocated to allow for a more thorough assessment of OE and IFAD's evaluation function. In this regard, the possibility of providing the final report to the Evaluation Committee and Executive Board in April 2010 was discussed.

B. Completion Evaluation of the Rural Development Project for the North-Eastern Provinces in Argentina (PRODERNEA)

10. The Committee commended OE on an excellent evaluation and expressed broad agreement with the main findings and recommendations. A representative of the Government of Argentina² was present and conveyed his Government's satisfaction with the high-quality evaluation and the participatory approach followed.
11. The Committee noted that the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) did not cofinance the operation as originally planned, as these funds were transferred – at the request of Government – to address the emergencies that followed the financial crisis suffered by Argentina in 2001. However, the Committee underlined the importance of efforts by IFAD to partner with organizations like IDB, because of their potential contribution to replicating and scaling up innovative features piloted under IFAD-funded projects and programmes.
12. The Committee highlighted the importance of IFAD's continued cooperation with Argentina as a means of generating lessons and good practices of potential value to other middle-income countries. Committee members also welcomed the positive results in policy dialogue, especially in terms of IFAD's contribution to the establishment of the Office of the Under-Secretary for Rural Development and Family Farming within the Secretariat for Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food in Argentina.
13. The Committee underlined the importance of partnership between national and provincial governments for effective implementation and results on the ground. It also noted that some issues continue to be challenging, such as the need for a wider outreach of rural financial services, land tenure and environmental management. Finally, among other issues, the Committee encouraged IFAD to pay particular attention to women and youth in future operations in the country.

C. Preview of the Office of Evaluation's three-year rolling work programme for 2010-2012 and resource issues for 2010

14. The Committee broadly agreed with the priorities, work programme and resource issues contained in the preview document, as well as the proposed destination of the Committee's annual field visits from 2010 to 2012.³ It recommended that OE develop its comprehensive work programme and budget for 2010, taking into account a number of suggestions made during the fifty-seventh session.
15. The Committee requested OE to develop a final proposal for corporate-level evaluations (CLEs) to be undertaken in the future. This would require consultation

² Mr Sandro Sassatelli, Director of Planning and Evaluation, Under-Secretariat for Rural Development and Family Farming, Government of Argentina.

³ The field visits will be to India in 2009, Mozambique in 2010, Yemen in 2011 and Ghana in 2012.

with IFAD Management in order to ensure that such evaluations could adequately inform the corresponding policy/strategy to be prepared by Management in the three-year period covered by the OE rolling work programme. Moreover, in developing the list of CLEs, the Committee invited OE to consider the commitments that IFAD has to fulfill during the Eighth Replenishment period.

16. On a related topic, the Committee pointed to the need for OE to reflect upon the implications for its work programme and resources of the planned increases in IFAD's overall programme of work in the Eighth Replenishment period.
17. OE was requested to outline its approach and planned activities in two specific areas in the comprehensive work programme and budget document to be discussed with the Committee in October 2009. The areas are: (i) ways and means to strengthen the learning loop; and (ii) OE's role in evaluation capacity development in partner countries. On another issue, the Committee encouraged OE to explore opportunities for joint evaluations, which would, among other issues, allow for further implementation of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and strengthen partnerships with other institutions.
18. The Committee suggested that further information be provided to the Committee in October 2009 on OE's human and financial resources, including the number of associate professional officers in the division and a breakdown of costs by evaluation activity.

D. President's Report on the Implementation Status of Evaluation Recommendations and Management Issues (PRISMA), together with the comments of the Office of Evaluation

19. The Committee expressed its appreciation to Management for a high-quality document, and also conveyed its broad agreement with OE's comments.
20. The Committee found that the document was useful in tracing the evolution of implementation of evaluation recommendations over time. For example, it provided the means to analyse the status of implementation of evaluation recommendations over a period of time (2004-2007 in this edition of the document) as well as to report on the implementation of recommendations in a single year.
21. The Committee noted with appreciation that there were no pending recommendations for the current year. However, an important issue brought up by the Committee was the relatively low rate of implementation of the evaluation recommendations made to partner governments. This is critical, especially as OE evaluations are increasingly revealing the centrality of government performance to achieving results in rural poverty reduction. The Committee encouraged Management to identify follow-up mechanisms to ensure that governments implement the relevant evaluation recommendations fully and in a timely manner.
22. The Committee agreed with the OE suggestion to include a new thematic block – on non-lending activities – in the next PRISMA. This will ensure that due attention is devoted to implementing the increasing number of recommendations related to non-lending activities, including policy dialogue, partnership-building and knowledge management. Moreover, the Committee also concurred with the need for greater analysis and explanation of why a particular recommendation could not be followed up or was no longer considered relevant.
23. In response to a request by the Committee, OE clarified that the number of evaluations undertaken by the division over the past years has remained more or less the same each year. There are a number of reasons for the relatively smaller number of evaluations considered in the latest PRISMA. A key issue is that the recommendations from some completed evaluations will be implemented only in 2009, once the corresponding country strategic opportunities programme or project design has been developed by Management.

E. IFAD Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples, together with the comments of the Office of Evaluation

24. The Committee welcomed the draft Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples (IP), as well as OE's comments. OE's comments on the policy have been issued as an addendum to the document being presented to the Board to facilitate their consideration of the policy, as per customary practice.
25. Members agreed that efforts will need to be devoted to the implementation of the policy. They concurred with Management that this could be done by fine-tuning, as appropriate, existing operational guidelines,⁴ rather than developing new guidelines specifically for the policy. The Committee encouraged Management to provide an oral report at the Board discussion on the implementation plan for the policy, including timelines.
26. On another issue, the Committee also underlined the need to ensure that project-level monitoring and evaluation systems are further refined to include indicators related to indigenous people, so that data collection and reporting could be facilitated and made more IP-specific.
27. Members requested that IFAD pay due attention to social and cultural values, as well as to local conditions when promoting participation and consultation with indigenous peoples. Some members also pointed out the important role that governments have in the development of activities and projects specifically targeted at indigenous peoples.
28. In discussing the proposed Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility, some Committee members encouraged Management to search for ways to ensure that the facility is taken into consideration in the development of the new IFAD grants policy.

F. Other business

29. **Minutes of the Evaluation Committee.** The Committee requested clarification with regard to the preparation of minutes of Evaluation Committee sessions. It was satisfied to learn that the minutes are prepared by OE and circulated among Committee members for comments within one month of the date of the relevant session.

⁴ Such as the Guidelines for Preparation and Implementation of a Results-based Country Strategic Opportunities Programme and the Operational Guidelines for Supervision and Implementation Support of Projects and Programmes Funded from IFAD Loans and Grants.

