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## **Report on the implementation of the Enhanced Associate Professional Officer Programme (EAPOP)**

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For: **Information**

## **Note to Executive Board Directors**

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# Report on the implementation of the Enhanced Associate Professional Officer Programme (EAPOP)

## I. Background

1. At the third session of the Consultation on the Seventh Replenishment of IFAD's Resources (document REPL.VII/3/R.4), it was noted that the current Associate Professional Officer (APO) Programme has drawn its participants exclusively from member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).
2. At the fourth session of the Consultation (document REPL.VII/4/R.9), two options were proposed for consideration: (a) enhance the current APO Programme by recruiting APOs from non-OECD countries and (b) replace the existing APO Programme with a young professional programme similar to that administered by the World Bank.
3. The APO Programme is important for IFAD's operations and equitable geographical distribution is a key premise in the functioning of the Fund. It was on this principle that, at its fifth session, the Consultation expressed support for the concept of an enhanced APO programme that offers opportunities to candidates from non-OECD Member States and requested the Executive Board to review, in September 2006, the implications of a new programme and explore ways in which it could be implemented.

## II. Introduction of the Pilot Programme for the Enhanced Associate Professional Officer Programme

4. At its eighty-eighth session, the Executive Board approved the recommendation (EB 2006/88/R.6, C.R.P.1/Rev.1 and Rev. 2) for IFAD to strengthen the representation of participants from non-OECD countries by expanding its APO Programme and running, in parallel, an Enhanced Associate Professional Officer Programme (EAPOP) on a trial basis over the three-year period 2007-2009.
5. The thrust of the EAPOP is identical to that of the APO Programme, providing young professionals with the opportunity to gain practical experience through a structured learning experience while contributing to the achievement of IFAD's goals. APOs who are OECD nationals would be funded by the respective Member State Government while non-OECD nationals under the EAPOP would be funded through IFAD's regular budget and supplementary funds.
6. It was established that at the closure of the pilot phase, an evaluation of the EAPOP would be undertaken, the outcome would be presented to Board members and the future of the programme decided in light of the evaluation and the cost implications. This is the purpose of the present paper.

## III. Implementation of the EAPOP

7. A generic vacancy announcement was sent to the permanent representations in Rome, United Nations organizations and international financial institutions, posted on the Internet and the IFAD intranet; and advertised in leading magazines/newspapers (*The East African, Jeune Afrique, Al-Ahram Weekly, Al Sharq Al Awsat, Al Hayat, The Wall Street Journal Asia, América Economía* and *El País Internacional*). The vacancy announcement led to the receipt of 631 applications from 108 countries.
8. Eligible candidates were young professionals, nationals of developing countries of less than 32 years of age, with a degree in a relevant discipline and two years' professional experience. Fluency in English was essential, and knowledge of another IFAD official language was considered desirable.

9. Following a Senior Management meeting in IFAD, the allocations of four EAPOP positions were agreed and assigned within the Programme Management Department.
10. The recruitment process was carried out in accordance with the rules and regulations set forth in the Human Resources Policy. Interviews were held in Rome and conducted using the targeted selection methodology. Candidates were also required to sit a written test. Four candidates were selected from Lebanon, Mongolia, India and Mauritius.
11. These candidates underwent the same the recruitment procedure and medical clearances and were extended the same benefits as those applied for internationally recruited Associate Professional Officers. A one-year contract at the P-2 level was offered, renewable for one more year subject to satisfactory performance.

#### **IV. Evaluation of the programme**

12. As with regular staff members, the performance evaluation system was used to assess the performance of the EAPOP candidates. In addition, the feedback set forth below was collected from both the supervisors and the candidates.

##### **A. Key comments from supervisors:**

13. Supervisors reported that the EAPOP programme had offered IFAD an opportunity to:
  - (a) examine the market of developing country candidates and benefit from the work of talented young professionals who have enriched IFAD's corporate diversity; and
  - (b) provide the participants with a unique opportunity to gain experience with and understanding of an international financial institution and the United Nations system.

##### **B. Key comments from EAPOP candidates:**

14. EAPOP participants reported that working for IFAD had enabled them to:
  - (a) benefit from effective guidance from supervisors that had enhanced their professional development and motivation;
  - (b) build strong networks that will facilitate future relationships with IFAD, with international development organizations and with the private sector; and
  - (c) gain greater understanding of development work within the United Nations system and international financial institutions.

##### **C. Evaluation**

15. The EAPOP programme fosters a better understanding of the United Nations by the participants and enriches the APO programme by enhancing its diversity and quality. The APO programme on its own does not foster the engagement of young professionals from non-OECD member states and this is why the EAPOP is particularly relevant to IFAD. By promoting the development of young professionals from non-OECD countries, the EAPOP also serves to reinvigorate and innovate the approaches that IFAD uses in realizing its mandate.

#### **V. Funding**

16. The cost of the programme, approved for this pilot phase, was limited to US\$1 million for the recruitment of four EAPOPs, two in 2007 and two in 2008, over the three-year period 2007-2009. During the implementation of the programme, it became clear that the amount allocated for this purpose was insufficient and it was necessary to allocate additional funds, in the amount of US\$360,824, from IFAD's administrative budget to cover the three-year period.

## **VI. Conclusion and recommendation**

17. Based on the results and feedback received, this initiative has shown clear benefits for both the participants and the divisions that have engaged them. However the cost of each opportunity was greater than the original budget and contributions from Member States did not materialize. While it is vital that IFAD continue to engage highly qualified young professionals from non-OECD countries who may in the future play a critical role in the development of their region, the programme, as currently structured, is not viable if funded solely through IFAD's administrative budget. Management will revert to the Board with regard to the funding of this programme through other financing schemes.