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Investing in rural people

Comments of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD on the Draft Approach Paper of the External Peer Review of IFAD's Evaluation Function

Note to Evaluation Committee members

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For: Review

Comments of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD on the Draft Approach Paper of the External Peer Review of IFAD's Evaluation Function

I. General observations

1. In December 2017, the Executive Board approved the undertaking of a second external peer review of IFAD's evaluation function. The first such review was conducted in 2009. The report was presented to the Evaluation Committee and the Executive Board in 2010 and, based on their deliberations, a revised Evaluation Policy was presented to and approved by the Executive Board in 2011.
2. The Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) welcomes this external peer review, which comes at a time when IFAD is undergoing major organizational changes, such as the mainstreaming of decentralization, and is preparing for the operationalization of the Eleventh Replenishment of IFAD's Resources (IFAD11).
3. IOE believes that the external review will further strengthen the contribution of the evaluation function to accountability, learning and, ultimately, to the institutional efficiency and development effectiveness of IFAD.
4. Similar to the previous peer review, the present one will be carried out by the Evaluation Cooperation Group of the multilateral development banks. Moreover, as with the last review, the peer review panel will include the Chair of the United Nations Evaluation Group and a representative from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) Network on Development Evaluation.
5. Such composition is highly relevant as it reflects IFAD's hybrid nature as both a specialized agency of the United Nations and an international financial institution. It is important to note that the United Nations Evaluation Group, the Evaluation Cooperation Group and OECD-DAC have produced frameworks for peer review of their members and have ample experience in applying them. They have also produced norms and standards that are considered as best practices for development evaluation. IOE is fully confident that these will guarantee a high-quality peer review.

II. Specific comments

6. IOE agrees with the overall formulation of the approach paper and underlines the importance of taking into account IFAD's specific mandate as the only United Nations agency fully devoted to rural poverty reduction and development, and with interventions that reach poor and remote areas and target socially and economically disadvantaged communities and groups.
7. IOE notes that the peer review questions have been formulated in broad terms. More specific questions may emerge when the review is actually carried out. Of crucial importance will be for both IOE and Management to conduct a thorough self-assessment exercise. This will help the panel focus their assessment on certain aspects while adding their own specific analysis and scope.
8. IOE concurs that it is fundamental to include in the peer review both the self-evaluation and the independent evaluation systems of IFAD as the two complement each other. In fact, the scope and quality of self-evaluation are major determinants of the scope and type of independent evaluation work. This is because independent evaluation needs to verify the quality and credibility of the available self-evaluation evidence and fill in any data or knowledge gaps when assessing institutional, country programme and project-level performance and results. In addition, it is an appropriate time to assess the evolution of IFAD's self-evaluation system and the initiatives undertaken in recent years to

strengthen that system.

9. IOE will be highly interested in the peer review's findings and recommendations regarding evaluation methodology, the range and diversification of the evaluation products, and evaluation processes and procedures. As organizations evolve, it is important to capture new learning needs. IOE will welcome the peer review's recommendations on the streamlining of the self- and independent evaluation processes and interactions. These will make an important contribution to the preparation of the second part of the harmonization agreement by Management and IOE in 2019, which will focus on processes and procedures.
10. IOE would also welcome an analysis and recommendations on the utilization of evaluation products, and particularly on the extent to which Management has followed up on evaluation recommendations, what the main explanatory factors are and how uptake of the recommendations can be further supported in the future.

III. Final remarks

11. IOE looks forward to this second peer review of IFAD's evaluation function and stands ready to provide to the panel all the support that it may require.