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Minutes of the 112th Session of the Evaluation Committee

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Evaluation Committee — 112th Session
Rome, 19 March 2021

For: **Information**

Minutes of the 112th Session of the Evaluation Committee

1. The deliberations of the Evaluation Committee at its 112th session held virtually on 19 March 2021 are reflected in the present minutes.
2. Once approved by the Committee, the minutes will be shared with the Executive Board.

Agenda item 1: Opening of the session

3. The session was attended by Committee members for Cameroon, France, India, Indonesia (Chair), Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, Nigeria and Switzerland. Silent observers were present from Austria, Canada, China, Luxembourg and Sweden. The session was also attended by the Director, Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE); Deputy Director, IOE; Associate Vice-President, Programme Management Department; Associate Vice-President, Strategy and Knowledge Department; Director, Operational Policy and Results Division; Director, Research and Impact Assessment Division (RIA); Secretary of IFAD; and other IFAD staff.
4. The Chairperson and the other Committee members welcomed Mr Naidoo, following his recent appointment to the position of Director, IOE.
5. The Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Uganda, Her Excellency Elizabeth Paula Napeyok; and Mr Siragi Wakaabu, Agriculture Attaché and Alternate Permanent Representative of the Republic of Uganda, participated in the Committee's deliberations on the country strategy and programme evaluation (CSPE) for Uganda. Ms Onipatsa Helinoro Tianamahefa, First Counsellor, Chargé d'Affaires a.i. and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Madagascar; Mr Suzelin Ratohiarijaona Rakotoarisolo, Counsellor and Alternate Permanent Representative of the Republic of Madagascar; Ms Fanja Raharinomena, Director General of the Coordination and Support Unit for Projects and Regional Activities of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries; and Mr Ndriana Rahaga, Programme Support Unit (CAPFIDA) Coordinator, participated in the Committee's deliberations on the Madagascar CSPE. Mr Addisu Melkamu Kebede, Second Secretary, Alternate Permanent Representative of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, participated in the Committee's deliberations on the impact evaluation of the Community-based Integrated Natural Resources Management Project in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Their presence ensured that the deliberations benefited from the Government's perspective on the respective evaluations.

Agenda item 2: Adoption of the agenda (EC 2021/112/W.P.1)

6. The Committee adopted the agenda as contained in document EC 2021/112/W.P.1 with the inclusion, under other business, of a brief update on the Eleventh Replenishment of IFAD's Resources (IFAD11) impact assessments, provided by the Director, RIA.

Agenda item 3: Country strategy and programme evaluation for the Republic of Uganda (EC 2021/112/W.P.2 + Add. 1)

Key messages:

- The Committee welcomed the positive results achieved by IFAD in Uganda and noted that the design of the new country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP) had taken into account the findings of this evaluation.
- The Committee highlighted the need for greater emphasis on women and youth, climate change adaptation, knowledge management, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and also stressed the importance of country presence for better results.

7. The Evaluation Committee welcomed this second CSPE for the Republic of Uganda, covering the period from 2013 to 2020, as contained in document EC 2021/112/W.P.2, together with the agreement at completion point signed by the Government and IFAD Management, as contained in its addendum.
8. Members welcomed the statement delivered on behalf of the Government of Uganda by Her Excellency, Ambassador Elizabeth Paula Napeyok.
9. The Committee welcomed the significant achievements and positive outcomes highlighted in the evaluation. In particular, members appreciated the positive impact on rural poverty and the increase in productivity and rural household income, and agreed with the findings and recommendations for improvement, as well as with Management's response.
10. Management supported all the recommendations made by IOE in the evaluation report, and agreed on the need to: expand the value chain approach to other commodities; mainstream climate change; deliver more transformative interventions for women and youth; strengthen support to the Government on policy issues, capacity-building, financial management and M&E. Management also agreed that a more programmatic approach and more systematic knowledge management would help IFAD with cross-fertilization between investments, and highlighted how the evaluation raised a number of interesting points for improvement that were not unique to Uganda. These issues, and indeed all of the issues highlighted in the CSPE, had been taken into consideration in the development of the COSOP, which would be reviewed by the Executive Board.
11. Members noted the tension between poverty reduction goals and pro-poor community development approaches, on one side, and growth strategies towards commercialization and strengthening of value chains, on the other. IOE considered that a clear theory of change was needed to ensure that the benefits related to commercialization and value chain development would reach the more vulnerable groups.
12. Members also noted the need to strengthen IFAD's in-country presence to improve operational effectiveness in the country, to enhance partnership-building, policy dialogue and engagement with the Government, and to increase the interaction between lending and non-lending activities. Management noted that, while the Country Director was based in Nairobi, IFAD was nonetheless represented in-country by national officers. However, Management confirmed their attention to this issue.
13. The importance of funding from the regular grants programme was highlighted as a means of, inter alia, fostering innovation, leveraging the potential of digitalization and working on transboundary activities. With respect to the latter, the Committee welcomed the update that IFAD was working with its sister Rome-based agencies on issues related to cross-border trade.

14. Management confirmed their commitment to an M&E action plan at project level, a sustainability action plan, an efficiency action plan and an update of the scaling-up strategy, all of which would also come together in the new Development Effectiveness Framework (DEF). The DEF would be submitted for review to the Evaluation Committee in October and to the Executive Board in December. Management reiterated that a number of issues raised as areas in need of specific attention – efficiency, sustainability, innovation, knowledge management, policy engagement, and non-lending activities, for example – were prevalent in many countries, and would be addressed through institutional action plans. Management also proposed sharing some of these action plans with the Committee to discuss and gather members’ feedback. Management would in any case submit, for review, the DEF to the Committee in October and to the Board in December.

Agenda item 4: Country strategy and programme evaluation for the Republic of Madagascar (EC 2021/112/W.P.3)

Key messages:

- The Committee welcomed the positive results achieved by IFAD in Madagascar and noted that the design of the new COSOP would be developed taking into account the results of this evaluation.
- The Committee highlighted, in particular, the need to strengthen natural resource management, climate change adaptation and mitigation, resilience building, and inclusion of the most vulnerable groups, including women and youth.

15. The Evaluation Committee welcomed this second CSPE for the Republic of Madagascar, covering the period from 2013 to 2019, as contained in document EC 2021/112/W.P.3, together with the agreement at completion point signed by the Government and IFAD Management, as contained in the report.
16. Members welcomed the statement delivered on behalf of the Government of Madagascar by Ms Fanja Raharinomena.
17. The Committee agreed with the findings of the evaluation. While supporting the recommendations, one member noted that these could have been more concise and strategic. The evaluation highlighted the positive effects of IFAD’s programme in the country, particularly on increasing income, agricultural productivity and food availability, which had been achieved mainly through supporting productive capacity, production techniques and marketing. Management welcomed the broad analysis presented in the report, which provided a valuable opportunity for stocktaking, as well as the participatory approach adopted by IOE.
18. Members highlighted the need for greater inclusion of vulnerable groups, such as women and youth, particularly with regard to climate change adaptation. Sustainable management of natural resources, particularly of water, was key to reducing the vulnerability of rural communities to the effects of climate change. Given the complexities of dealing with large project areas, Management noted that the current programme focused on the southern area of the country and was resolutely pro-poor, targeting vulnerable groups, particularly those dependent on food aid, with a view to facilitating access to inputs and opportunities, and building their resilience.
19. Other issues requiring attention included sustainability, engagement of the private sector and mobilization of public finance. The latter issue was seen as key to sustainability; the Committee highlighted the limited investment by the Government in the agricultural sector and the low level of domestic cofinancing of IFAD-supported projects. On a related note, Management advised that efforts were

being made to crowd in much-needed funding for infrastructure as well as climate finance. An operation was currently under review by the Green Climate Fund.

20. Knowledge management was also highlighted as an area requiring attention, given its potential for positively impacting the sustainability of benefits, building institutional capacity and identifying opportunities for innovation. In this regard, Management advised that it had embarked on a partnership with Delivery Associates with a view to strengthening the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock through the establishment of an internal delivery unit.

Agenda item 5: Impact evaluation of the Community-based Integrated Natural Resources Management Project in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (EC 2021/112/W.P.4)

Key messages:

- The Committee welcomed the impact evaluation of the Community-based Integrated Natural Resources Management Project and learned that the results of this impact evaluation would inform a higher-level IOE thematic evaluation on smallholder adaptation to climate change.
- To ensure value for money, members advised that future impact evaluations should be carefully selected to ensure that they provide lessons of general importance that could be useful to IFAD beyond the specific type of project evaluated.

21. The Evaluation Committee welcomed the impact evaluation of the Community-based Integrated Natural Resources Management Project in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, covering the period from 2010 to 2019, as contained in document EC 2021/112/W.P.4, together with Management's response. This was the seventh impact evaluation carried out by IOE in the series that was first launched in 2013.
22. Members welcomed the statement delivered on behalf of the Government of Ethiopia by Mr Addisu Melkamu Kebede.
23. The Committee took note of the findings and recommendations of the impact evaluation, and the Management response. Members highlighted the relatively high cost of such a specialized product, questioning its value for money in relation to the significance of the findings for the organization. There was a need to carefully select future impact evaluations to ensure that they provide lessons of general importance to IFAD beyond the specific type of project evaluated. Management concurred, noting that impact assessments were conducted on at least 15 per cent of the portfolio, using a rigorous methodology, and that the sample was expected to increase.
24. IOE stated that there had been an increase in the conduct of impact evaluations in other international financial institutions (IFIs) and in the United Nations system. While acknowledging that impact evaluations may be relatively more expensive than other types of evaluations, IOE noted that IFAD was on the low side of the range of costs compared with other organizations, and that there were ways to further reduce the costs. Responding to queries as to the choice of this particular project, IOE explained that this impact evaluation would inform and provide more evidence for an ongoing higher-level IOE thematic evaluation on smallholder adaptation to climate change.
25. While noting the positive results of the project in terms of increases in income and nutrition levels of beneficiaries in a few watersheds where multiple and complementary activities were implemented; members also noted the lack of significant empowerment and participation of more vulnerable groups, such as women, youth and the landless, particularly in relation to access to land and

natural resources. Members also agreed with the evaluation recommendation that natural resource management projects should adopt a master plan for integrated participatory watershed management, and an effective rural development approach, to ensure that the local communities obtain the necessary resources to maintain the water infrastructure, thus also ensuring the sustainability of project benefits.

26. Management noted that the findings of this evaluation of a more traditional natural resource management programme would provide valuable lessons for the pipeline of programmes targeting catchments across the portfolio in East and Southern Africa. Noting the importance of water efficiency in dry zones, the Committee was informed that IFAD was leading a South-South and Triangular Cooperation framework with the Government of Ethiopia to learn from other African countries on, inter alia, water pricing policy and water resource management with a view to scaling up successful interventions. Land tenure was also recognized as key to the sustainability of benefits as well as a tool for stability and peace.

**Agenda item 6: Evaluation synthesis on infrastructure at IFAD
(EC 2021/112/W.P.5 + Add. 1)**

Key messages:

- The Committee welcomed the evaluation synthesis on infrastructure at IFAD, and noted with appreciation the collaboration between IOE and Management.
- Members highlighted how rural infrastructure was crucial to IFAD's work, and suggested submitting the report, as well as the draft operational guidelines on infrastructure, to the Board.

27. The Evaluation Committee welcomed the evaluation synthesis on infrastructure at IFAD, as contained in document EC 2021/112/W.P.5, together with Management's response, as contained in the addendum.
28. Members appreciated the rich findings, which provided good evidence of IFAD's comparative advantage in respect to other IFIs, through its focus on last-mile infrastructure. Members also welcomed the collaboration between IOE and Management in preparing the evaluation synthesis report (ESR). Members highlighted how rural infrastructure was crucial to IFAD's work and agreed with the finding that in-house capacity needed to be increased. Given the importance of the topic, including the findings on infrastructure for water management, members suggested that the ESR be shared with the Executive Board for further discussion.
29. Members highlighted the need for Management to integrate the recommendations into project design, implementation, monitoring and reporting, with a view to improving the efficiency safeguards and monitoring in such complex and diverse rural infrastructure investments. This could take the form of either a new strategy or operational guidelines, which could be shared with the Executive Board for review and comments.
30. Management was also encouraged to pay particular attention to the specificities of fragile contexts and the need to balance corruption risk and ownership by the borrowing country. Tracking of performance and the results of infrastructure investment at the corporate-level were also raised. Management provided information on ongoing partnerships with United Nations agencies and IFIs aimed at enhancing technical support.
31. The Committee noted the issue of financial sustainability and operational maintenance of rural infrastructure, highlighting the so-called "soft dimension of infrastructure". The issue of sustainability was linked to the governance of infrastructure, i.e. who manages it, whether the central government, the local

government or the private sector. These issues should be considered from the outset and an exit strategy devised to ensure the sustainability of benefits in the long term. IOE concurred with the need for a long-term vision, bearing in mind the costs of infrastructure maintenance, which had proven to be an issue in the case of roads, irrigation equipment and drinking water infrastructure. In relation to climate change, members noted how the Social, Environmental and Climate Assessment Procedures (SECAP) were seen as an excellent policy and basis for safeguarding rural infrastructure against climate change risks.

32. Management provided additional information on the shift from community-driven development projects to an emphasis on production and productivity, which had impacted the types of infrastructure investments. Guidelines and indicators had been developed to facilitate preparation in infrastructure, emphasizing the need to work with local communities to identify infrastructure interventions, foster ownership and sustain benefits.

Agenda item 7: Draft revised IFAD Evaluation Policy (EC 2021/112/W.P.6)

Key messages:

- The Committee welcomed the draft revised IFAD Evaluation Policy, which integrated feedback received. Members provided additional feedback to be reflected in an addendum to the policy.
- The Committee endorsed the submission of the draft revised IFAD Evaluation Policy, together with the aforementioned addendum, to the 132nd session of the Executive Board for approval. Consideration may be given to further discussions on finalization of the annexes to the policy thereafter.

33. The Committee welcomed the draft revised IFAD Evaluation Policy, as contained in document EC 2021/112/W.P.6, incorporating comments made by members at the Committee's seventh special session and noted that the revision was the result of a joint undertaking by IOE and Management.
34. Members noted how the draft revised IFAD Evaluation Policy provided for a comprehensive framework under which both the independent and the self-evaluation functions were clearly defined and related synergies highlighted.
35. Members provided additional feedback in order to fine-tune the document, in particular with regard to clarification of the role of the Evaluation Committee and consistency in the use of certain terminology. The Committee was informed that, as a member of the Evaluation Cooperation Group of Multilateral Development Banks, IFAD had applied the recognized standards on governance and independence dealing, inter alia, with management of human resources. IOE and Management committed to reaching out to members for further informal discussion with a view to ensuring that amendments were properly reflected in an addendum to the policy and submitted to the Board for formal approval at its April session.

Agenda item 8: Draft revised Terms of Reference of the Evaluation Committee (EC 2021/112/W.P.7)

Key message:

- The Committee welcomed the draft revised Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure, and endorsed their submission to the 132nd session of the Executive Board in April, together with an addendum reflecting feedback received.

36. The Committee welcomed the draft revised Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure, as contained in document EC 2021/112/W.P.7, incorporating comments made at the Committee's seventh special session.
37. Members requested clarification on the interchangeable use of the words consensus and unanimity in paragraph 2.3 of the document.
38. As with the Evaluation Policy, members would be consulted in finalizing an addendum reflecting agreed amendments, which would be submitted to the 132nd session of the Executive Board for approval.

Agenda item 9: Other business

Update on the Eleventh Replenishment of IFAD's Resources impact assessments

39. The Director, RIA provided a brief update on the IFAD11 impact assessments, specifically on the adaptive approach developed to ensure that IFAD11 corporate commitments were met despite the challenges presented as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
40. Members welcomed the presentation and asked for the presentation materials to be shared for review.

Closure of the session

41. Noting that a new composition of the Evaluation Committee would be approved at the April Board session, the Chairperson thanked the Committee members for their contributions to the discussions at the current session and their unfailing support over his term of office as Chair. Committee members expressed their warm appreciation for the Chair's stewardship and invaluable contribution to the work of the Evaluation Committee.