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## **Minutes of the 117<sup>th</sup> Session of the Evaluation Committee**

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**Action:** The Evaluation Committee is invited to approve the minutes of the 117<sup>th</sup> session held on 7 June 2022

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**Technical questions:**

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## Minutes of the 117<sup>th</sup> Session of the Evaluation Committee

1. The deliberations of the Evaluation Committee at its 117<sup>th</sup> session – held both in person and virtually on 7 June 2022 – are reflected in the present minutes.
2. The minutes approved by the Committee will be shared with the Executive Board for information.

### **Agenda item 1: Opening of the session**

3. The Secretary of IFAD opened the meeting by welcoming the representative of Switzerland, who was joining the Committee for the remainder of the term of office.
4. The session was attended by Committee members for Cameroon, France, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Mexico and Switzerland. Observers were present from China and the Dominican Republic. The session was attended by the Director, Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE); the Deputy Director, IOE; the Associate Vice-President, Programme Management Department; the Director, Operational Policy and Results Division; the Secretary of IFAD; and other IFAD staff.
5. Mr Nuriddin Kushnazarov, Counsellor and Deputy Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), IFAD and the World Food Programme (WFP), was present to participate in the Committee's deliberations on the country strategy and programme evaluation (CSPE) for that country, to ensure that the deliberations benefited from the Government's perspective on the evaluation.

### **Agenda item 2: Election of the Chairperson of the Evaluation Committee (EC 2022/117/W.P.2)**

6. Committee members from List B and List C were called upon to nominate a candidate to chair the Committee. Since no nominations were presented, the election of the Chairperson was postponed to the next session of the Committee to be held in September. Members agreed to nominate Mexico as temporary Chairperson to preside over the proceedings of the 117<sup>th</sup> session of the Committee.

### **Agenda item 3: Adoption of the agenda (EC 2022/117/W.P.1 + Add.1)**

7. The Committee adopted the agenda as contained in document EC 2022/117/W.P.1.

### **Agenda item 4: Country strategy and programme evaluation for the Republic of Indonesia (EC 2022/117/W.P.3)**

#### **Key messages:**

- Committee members expressed their wish to review the CSPE together with the signed agreement at completion point, and reiterated their request to review the CSPEs and draft country strategic opportunities programmes (COSOPs) in tandem, when possible.
- Members, IOE and Management agreed on the need to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems, as well as knowledge management, in order to be able to properly document IFAD's impact on the ground.

8. The Evaluation Committee welcomed this third CSPE for Indonesia, covering the period from 2013 to 2021, as contained in document EC 2022/117/W.P.3. Committee members commended the evaluation's high quality and sophisticated

analysis considering the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the good partnership and collaboration with the Government.

9. Members took note of the statement delivered on behalf of the Government of Indonesia by Mr Purna Cita Nugraha, First Secretary and Alternate Permanent Representative of the Republic of Indonesia to IFAD.
10. Members expressed concern regarding the finding that IFAD projects seemed to have been shifting their focus away from the poorest rural populations and the poorest areas in the east. Members also noted the moderately unsatisfactory progress made on gender equality and women's access to services and resources, the moderately unsatisfactory performance in terms of rural impact, and the weaknesses in M&E and knowledge management.
11. From a general point of view, members called for evaluations to adopt definitions and metrics that would be comparable among projects in different countries. IOE explained that such metrics and data were well detailed in the CSPE for Indonesia. IOE reminded members of the recent launch of the revised evaluation manual, which defined IFAD's evaluation methodology and a set of evaluation criteria, and facilitated comparison among projects and countries. IOE further highlighted how the evaluation criteria and standards adopted follow those used by other international financial institutions (IFIs), the Evaluation Cooperation Group and the United Nations Evaluation Group. In response to the call for more data on the collaboration among the Rome-based agencies (RBAs), IOE recalled the RBA corporate-level evaluation conducted under IFAD leadership with the evaluation offices of FAO and WFP, which included Indonesia as one of the three case studies.
12. Management confirmed that the agreement at completion point had been signed electronically by the Government just before the meeting and would be annexed to the COSOP, which would be submitted to the Executive Board for review in December. Management acknowledged the need for improvement in knowledge management while underlining the difficulties posed by the sharp decrease in resources available in the regular grants programme for these and other so-called "soft" activities. Management also confirmed that the evaluation criteria used for self-evaluation were fully aligned with those used for independent evaluation, in accordance with the revised evaluation manual. The specificities of each evaluation product would be codified and detailed, product by product, in volume two of the revised evaluation manual currently under preparation.
13. Management highlighted the challenges posed by having to seek a balance between an increasingly long list of replenishment commitments and government priorities, which tend to lead to more complex projects rather than more realistic and simpler projects. In this sense, Management recalled that one of the main reasons for the geographic dispersion of IFAD's interventions was the response to government requests to test models in different regional contexts. Management also underlined that the CSPE showed not a lack of impact, but rather an inability to document that impact, hence the importance of stronger M&E and knowledge management systems.
14. Management acknowledged and shared the concerns raised on the poverty focus, while reassuring the Committee that rather than drifting away from the poorest beneficiaries and regions, the focus had been on finding the right balance between targeting poor rural populations and promoting a more business-oriented approach. Such an approach supported value chain development, engagement with more dynamic stakeholders and access to markets, with a view to overcoming poverty in a more sustainable manner. On RBA collaboration, Management informed the Committee that the three agencies, under the leadership of IFAD, had developed a joint RBA country strategy endorsed by the Government to support inclusive and sustainable food systems. Based on the joint strategy and further analysis, the

agencies had developed a concept note for a pilot project to be implemented in one of the poorest eastern provinces.

**Agenda item 5: Country strategy and programme evaluation for the Republic of Uzbekistan (EC 2022/117/W.P.4 + Add.1)**

**Key messages:**

- Committee members highlighted the issue of inclusiveness and access to rural finance by the most vulnerable groups, particularly women and youth.
- Members, IOE and Management agreed on the need to strengthen M&E systems and knowledge management, in order to be able to properly document IFAD's impact on the ground.

15. The Evaluation Committee welcomed this first CSPE for Uzbekistan, covering the period from 2011 to 2020, as contained in document EC 2022/117/W.P.4, together with the agreement at completion point signed by the Government and Management, as contained in the addendum.
16. Members took note of the statement delivered on behalf of the Government of Uzbekistan by Mr Nuriddin Kushnazarov, Counsellor and Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Uzbekistan to FAO, IFAD and WFP.
17. Members highlighted the issue of limited access to finance for the poorest groups, due to the large size of loans and collateral requirements, and the need to optimize value for money. Members further noted the moderately unsatisfactory performance on gender and women's engagement. The Committee called for a more programmatic approach focusing less on increasing production and more on productivity and on value chains and linkages to markets. Finally, members called for the new COSOP to be aligned with the country's United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF).
18. Both IOE and Management highlighted that, as the first CSPE, the report established a baseline and a starting point to assess progress in the future. Management underlined that, since the IFAD programme was relatively new, most of the interventions were geared towards learning from the pilots undertaken, such as the investment in the horticulture sector, which was a first for an IFI. Management acknowledged the lack of data to properly document the impact of IFAD's projects, and the need to strengthen M&E systems both at project level and within national institutions, as part of IFAD's broader support for institutional strengthening.
19. Management recognized that inclusiveness was a concern and efforts were under way to further integrate IFAD's policies within the national strategies. In this regard, IFAD's Inclusive Rural Finance Policy, approved in September 2021, would help inform further integration of financial products and services and accessibility for the most vulnerable populations. With regard to gender, Management informed the Committee that in the past six months IFAD and the Government had been working on the design and implementation of detailed action plans to improve effective targeting of intended beneficiaries, including women and youth.
20. Management reiterated that the new COSOP was fully aligned with the UNSDCF. The COSOP would focus on climate resilience, agricultural productivity and small-scale producers' access to viable markets and food systems. Management also praised the Government's leadership in placing great emphasis on fostering an enabling environment for inclusive rural transformation, which would allow IFAD to invest more in M&E and knowledge management systems, and in the culture of data.

**Agenda item 6: Proposed dates for sessions of the Evaluation Committee in 2023 (EC 2022/117/W.P.5)**

21. The Committee approved the proposed dates for the sessions of the Evaluation Committee in 2023, as contained in document EC 2022/117/W.P.5, namely:
- 120<sup>th</sup> session                      Tuesday, 4 April 2023
  - 121<sup>st</sup> session                        Wednesday, 21 June 2023
  - 122<sup>nd</sup> session                        Tuesday, 5 September 2023
  - 123<sup>rd</sup> session                        Thursday, 2 November 2023

**Closure of the session**

22. The Committee was reminded that the Office of the Secretary would share the draft minutes of the session, inclusive of key messages shared by Committee members, for clearance. The minutes once finalized would be submitted to the Executive Board for information at its 136<sup>th</sup> session.