
Minutes of the 121st session of the Evaluation Committee

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Minutes of the 121st session of the Evaluation Committee

1. The deliberations of the Evaluation Committee at its 121st session – held both in presence and virtually on 21 June 2023 – are reflected in the present minutes.
2. The minutes, as approved by the Committee, will be shared with the Executive Board for information.

Agenda item 1: Opening of the session

3. The Chair opened the session by welcoming the representative of Egypt, representing sub-List C1, who was joining the Committee for the remainder of the term of office. The Chair also welcomed the newly appointed Secretary of IFAD and Director of the Office of the Secretary, Ms Claudia ten Have.
4. The session was attended by Committee members from Egypt, France, India, Indonesia, Mexico (Chair), Nigeria and Switzerland. Observers were present from China, Dominican Republic and the United States. 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 Director, Research and Impact Assessment Division; the Secretary of IFAD and Director, Office of the Secretary; and other IFAD staff.
5. Ms Ainura Tuibaeva, Deputy Minister for Agriculture from the Kyrgyz Republic; and Mr Azamat Shamiev, International Cooperation Department Lead Specialist, also from the Kyrgyz Republic, participated in the Committee's deliberations on the country strategy and programme evaluation (CSPE) for the Kyrgyz Republic. Mr Kaoussou Diombéra, Adviser to the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development (in charge of international cooperation) of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau; and Ms Elena Tricoli, Representative of the Consulate of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, participated in the Committee's deliberations on the CSPE for Guinea-Bissau. The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Colombia, Her Excellency Ligia Margarita Quessep Bitar; and Mr Juan Camilo Saretzki Forero, Minister Counsellor, Alternate Permanent Representative, participated in the Committee's deliberations on the CSPE for Colombia. Their presence ensured that the deliberations benefited from the respective Government's perspective on the related evaluation.

Agenda item 2: Adoption of the agenda (EC 2023/121/W.P.1)

6. The Committee adopted the agenda as contained in document EC 2023/121/W.P.1. The Chair encouraged members to highlight their key messages throughout the discussion for inclusion in the minutes.

Agenda item 3: Country strategy and programme evaluation for the Kyrgyz Republic (EC 2023/121/W.P.2 + Add.1)

Key messages:

- Members welcomed this first CSPE for the Kyrgyz Republic, and the agreement at completion point, signed by the Government and IFAD, and supported the recommendations.
- Members highlighted the importance of midterm reviews and accurate economic analyses to be better positioned to understand impact and promote sustainability.
- Members, IOE and Management agreed on the need to focus on poor households, promote women's economic empowerment and inclusion, and further improve sustainable management of pasture resources.

- A key lesson learned related to the success of non-lending activities despite the fact that IFAD did not have a country office. Contributing factors included the focused portfolio, expertise of country directors, a good donor coordination platform and the United Nations Country Team.
- The new country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP) 2023-2027, which would be presented to the Executive Board in December, would be aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), taking into consideration the recommendations. A letter from the United Nations Resident Coordinator confirming alignment with country and partner strategies would be issued and was acknowledged as good practice.

7. The Evaluation Committee welcomed the CSPE for the Kyrgyz Republic, covering the period from 2009 to mid-2022, as contained in document EC 2023/121/W.P.2, as well as the agreement at completion point signed with the Government, as contained in the addendum. This was the first such evaluation conducted in the country.
8. Members took note of the statement delivered on behalf of the Government by Ms Ainura Tuibaeva, Deputy Minister for Agriculture of the Kyrgyz Republic.
9. The Committee highlighted the importance of midterm reviews, and requested clarification on the cost-benefit analysis of IFAD's investments and the impact on beneficiaries in terms of economic and social benefits. While the evaluation was not in a position to conduct detailed financial and economic analyses, a number of social and economic benefits had been identified in the report, including the long-lasting impact of policy, legislative and institutional frameworks and the conducive environment that had been supported, particularly in relation to community-based pasture management and private veterinary service provision. Management advised that the cost-benefit analyses of the projects showed a positive trend and additional details could be provided bilaterally.
10. Members acknowledged the overall performance and achievements in pasture governance management and in the provision of veterinary services. They also noted the Government's efforts and contribution to the successful implementation of the programmes by promoting effective collaboration and partnerships with numerous institutions and organizations, national actors, universities, and associations of pasture unions. Members also underscored the importance of a well-established donor coordination platform and channels for information-sharing.
11. The Committee supported the recommendations made in the report, with special reference to recommendation 1 on strengthening the poverty focus, in particular on how to better target poor households and improve non-livestock economic opportunities, and to recommendation 4 on strengthening the approach to supporting gender equality and women's empowerment. Noting that increased livestock production did not automatically translate into improved food security and nutrition, Management was encouraged to consider this aspect and adopt a holistic approach moving forward. Members took note of the agreement reached between the Government and IFAD, including on areas for reflection in the preparation of the next COSOP (2023-2027), in alignment with the UNSDCF.
12. Management acknowledged and shared the concerns raised on strengthening the poverty and gender focus, and underscored the need for greater efforts on sustainable management of pasture resources. Management confirmed that the recommendations were incorporated into the new COSOP, which would include a concept note for future investments, prioritizing the consolidation of the results achieved and the focus on scaling up pasture management and environmental sustainability. Improved targeting would be facilitated by adopting a pro-poor bottom-up approach based on a poverty and vulnerability analysis, which was a

shift away from the trickle-down approach that had been adopted previously. The COSOP would address the livestock sector in its entirety – taking into consideration, inter alia, gender, nutrition, access to markets and capacity-building of smallholders, their organizations and pasture unions.

13. Committee members noted that despite having no country presence, IFAD had performed well in knowledge management, partnership-building and policy engagement. As noted in the report, consistent support to the livestock sector over a period, long-term engagement with appropriate national institutions and strong collaboration with international partners were among the factors contributing to the portfolio achievements and good performance of non-lending activities. Management also noted the positive contribution of experienced country directors.

Agenda item 4: Country strategy and programme evaluation for the Republic of Guinea-Bissau (EC 2023/121/W.P.3)

Key messages:

- Members welcomed this first CSPE for Guinea-Bissau and the agreement at completion point signed by the Government and IFAD, and supported the recommendations.
- Members stressed how operations should not be based on outdated COSOPs and welcomed Management’s reassurance that all active programmes were now guided by active strategies.
- Members highlighted the need to design less complex projects in post-conflict countries and fragile contexts.
- The importance of strong partnerships and alignment with the UNSDCF was also underscored.

14. The Evaluation Committee welcomed the CSPE for Guinea-Bissau covering the period from 2008 to 2022, as contained in document EC 2023/121/W.P.3, as well as the agreement at completion point contained therein. This was the first such evaluation conducted in the country. Members took note of the statement delivered on behalf of the Government by Mr Kaoussou Diombéra, Adviser to the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development, in charge of international cooperation.
15. Members stressed that operations should not be based on outdated COSOPs and welcomed Management’s reassurance that all ongoing activities were now guided by active strategies, which could be adjusted during implementation. Members added that there was a need to align the new COSOP to the country’s UNSDCF. The Committee underscored the need to design less complex projects in post-conflict situations and fragile contexts, also in view of the lack of staff and capacity in the country. Members also invited Management to expand its collaboration with other United Nations agencies and international financial institutions (IFIs). IFAD’s role as co-lead of the agriculture working group, together with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, would facilitate diversification of partnerships. Emphasis was also being placed on strengthening community organizations.
16. Management noted that the new COSOP would focus on themes such as building resilience, increasing diversification, improving access to markets and building institutional capacity. The Committee was also informed that IFAD’s approach to risk in fragile contexts was being revised to integrate much better analyses and diagnostics of risk and risk mitigation. Stronger fragility assessments were now integrated into the country-level and project-level strategies, providing an opportunity to better assess and address institutional weakness.

Agenda item 5: Proposed dates for sessions of the Evaluation Committee in 2024 (EC 2023/121/W.P.4/Rev.1 + Corr.1)

17. The Committee approved the proposed dates for the sessions of the Evaluation Committee in 2024, as contained in document EC 2023/121/W.P.4 (to be revised as EC 2023/121/W.P.4/Rev.1) and its corrigendum, namely:
- 124th session Friday, 22 March 2024
 - 125th session Wednesday, 19 June 2024
 - 126th session Friday, 6 September 2024
 - 127th session Thursday, 31 October 2024

Agenda item 6: Country strategy and programme evaluation for the Republic of Colombia (EC 2023/121/W.P.5 + Add.1)

Key messages:

- Members welcomed this first CSPE for Colombia, noting that the agreement at completion point between the Government and IFAD was under consideration.
- Members, IOE and Management stressed the importance of including South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) activities in the country programme. Promoting SSTC and the sharing of public goods should be included in all COSOPs for upper-middle-income countries.
- Members also highlighted the importance of expanding partnerships with other IFIs and public development banks and channelling additional resources to IFAD's country programme. They supported the implementation of sustainable rural strategies linked to environmental management, particularly in areas of deforestation caused by agriculture.

18. The Evaluation Committee welcomed the CSPE for Colombia covering the period from 2008 to 2022, as contained in document EC 2023/121/W.P.5. This was the first such evaluation conducted in the country. It was noted that the agreement at completion point between the Government and IFAD had not yet been signed. Members, IOE and Management underscored IFAD's significant support in the country, describing IFAD as a pioneer in addressing rural development, poverty reduction and inequality, having implemented approaches used for the first time in Colombia.
19. Members took note of the statement delivered on behalf of the Government by Her Excellency Ligia Margarita Quessep Bitar, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Colombia.
20. Members supported the recommendations made in the report, in particular those on expanding partnerships with other IFIs and public development banks. Moreover, members noted the need to further develop the territorial approach through greater engagement with local public and private institutions. With respect to recommendation 4 on capacity-building, members concurred on the need for Colombia to foster inclusion, advancement of the peace process, institutionalization and sustainability. Special reference was made to the importance of sustainable rural strategies linked to environmental management, particularly in areas deforested for agriculture.
21. In terms of cooperation, members of the Committee stressed the importance of the inclusion of SSTC and the need for additional resources. On policy dialogue, members invited Management to explore opportunities for the denomination of origin of crops or typical products of Colombia (e.g. *cangrejo de piedra negro*, *ceviche*).

22. Management took note of comments made by Committee members, underscoring the programme's positive impact on minority groups, such as Indigenous Peoples, Afro-descendant communities and women. Management informed the Committee of the possibility of a co-funding mechanism with the Spanish Trust Fund; however this would be subject to government debt absorption capacity. Management confirmed the importance of SSTC as an input, not only for Colombia but for all upper-middle-income and middle-income countries.

Closure of the session

23. The Committee was reminded that the Office of the Secretary would share the draft minutes of the session, inclusive of the key messages shared by Committee members, for approval. Once finalized, the minutes would be submitted to the Executive Board for information at its 139th session.