

**MINUTES OF THE  
FORTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE EVALUATION COMMITTEE**

1. The Forty-Fifth Session of the Evaluation Committee met on 10 October 2006 and considered three agenda items: (a) the work programme and budget for 2007 of the Office of Evaluation (OE); (b) the annual report on results and impact of IFAD's operations (ARRI); and (c) other business. All Committee members except for India<sup>1</sup> and Nigeria participated in the session. Observers from Denmark and the United Kingdom were also present. In addition, various IFAD staff members attended the meeting, including the Assistant President, Programme Management Department (PMD), the Director of OE, the Executive Director of the Action Plan, the Acting Secretary of IFAD, and others.

2. **Work programme and budget for 2007 of OE.** The Committee discussed the OE work programme and budget document for 2007, and broadly agreed with the proposed priorities, work programme and budget of OE for next year, with the understanding that the Committee would receive the approach paper on the joint evaluation on Africa (see paragraphs 7-9). In fact, a number of questions were raised by the Committee with regard to the joint evaluation (some of them are reflected in paragraph 9), which will be adequately addressed in the approach paper, which OE will prepare together with the African Development Bank. Moreover, in general, one member perceived the increase in the OE 2007 budget proposal to be on the higher side.

3. As requested by the Committee and the Executive Board during their respective sessions in September 2006, the Committee appreciated OE's efforts and specific measures taken by the division to reduce the increase in the 2007 budget by around USD 500 000, as compared to the budget proposal presented in the preview document to the Committee and Board in September 2006.

4. This reduction in the proposed budget, which is still noticeably larger than in past years, has been achieved by deferring the commencement date to the last quarter in 2007 of two evaluations: (a) IFAD's approaches and operations in Mesoamerica; and (b) IFAD's capacity to promote replicable innovations to rural poverty reduction<sup>2</sup>. Two further measures have contributed to reducing the budget. These are: (a) a reduction in the estimated financial requirements for the joint evaluation on Africa; and (b) the dropping of the evaluation of the IFAD Action Plan from its work programme.

5. More specifically, OE will only undertake some preparatory work in relation to the abovementioned Mesoamerica and innovations evaluation in the last quarter of 2007, which are now both planned to be mostly undertaken in 2008. Thus, it has been possible for OE in its final proposal to reduce the resources that were originally allocated to these evaluations in the 2007 budget.

6. As per the request of the Board during its 88<sup>th</sup> session, the Committee also discussed further the evaluation of IFAD's Action Plan. In this regard, given the need to reduce the proposed OE work programme and budget and the difficulty in achieving a consensus in the Board on the merits and scope of the Action Plan evaluation, the Committee decided to

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<sup>1</sup> The representative of India sent his written comments ahead of the session, which were shared with all the participants.

<sup>2</sup> This evaluation would also cover the assessment of the Innovations Mainstreaming Initiative, which the Board has decided for OE to evaluate (see EB 2004/83/R.2 and GC 29/L.6).

recommend to the Board to remove this evaluation from OE's work programme in 2007. This measure has therefore also contributed to the overall reduction in the increase of the budget.

7. Moreover, OE informed the Committee that it has also reduced the proposed allocation from its administrative budget towards the planned joint evaluation with the African Development Bank (AfDB) on agriculture and rural development in 2007. In this regard, OE noted that the effective implementation of the joint evaluation will however now require the mobilisation of some amount of supplementary funds, for which there are concrete pledges.

8. The Committee expressed its general support for the joint evaluation on agriculture and rural development in Africa between IFAD and the AfDB. However, the participants asked for more information and clarifications on a number of items, which were provided by OE and Mr Roger Slade<sup>3</sup>. For example, in response to the Committee's request, OE clarified that although IFAD has made larger investments in agriculture and rural development as compared to AfDB in the continent, the costs of the evaluation will be shared equally between OE and AfDB's Operations Evaluation Department (OPEV). This would, *inter-alia*, promote joint ownership as well as allow for a broader scope to the evaluation. On another matter, the Committee asked about the synergies between the joint evaluation and OE's regular work programme in Africa next year. In this regard, as a measure to reduce the overall costs, OE noted that the sampling of countries will be organised in such a manner to ensure that the joint evaluation benefits from the four country programme evaluations<sup>4</sup>, which OE plans to undertake in Africa next year. Moreover, OE underlined that these evaluations will be conducted in such a manner that their results can inform and serve as a useful evidence base for the joint evaluation's analysis and conclusions. Moreover, it can be expected that a reduced level of effort would be invested by the joint evaluation team in those African countries/projects that will be covered by the regular OE 2007 work programme.

9. In conclusion on the joint evaluation with the AfDB, it was decided that OE would share with the Committee - before the December 2006 Executive Board - the approach paper of the joint evaluation under preparation by OE and OPEV. The approach paper would provide greater details, *inter-alia*, about the evaluation's objectives, methodology, key questions, process, timeframes, costs and so on.

10. On another topic, one member noted the importance of the revised evaluation manual being produced by OE, as it would also be of benefit for members of the Committee and partners at the country and project levels. Moreover, OE was encouraged to continue with the practice of organising multi-stakeholder learning workshops at the end of each evaluation process, as they provide a useful platform to debate lessons learned and recommendations emerging from evaluation.

11. Some members specifically welcomed the peer review system put in place within OE to ensure close adherence to its methodologies and enhance the quality of its evaluation results and outputs.

12. On the issue related to the Committee's annual field visit next year, while a final decision on the topic will be taken during the Committee's 46<sup>th</sup> session on 8 December 2006, members conveyed their interest to attend the Mali country programme evaluation national roundtable workshop in 2007. On the same topic and upon the request of one member, OE confirmed that the

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<sup>3</sup> Consultant, who worked with OE in preparing the joint approach paper.

<sup>4</sup> Ethiopia, Morocco, Nigeria and Sudan.

Mali CPE will be discussed as planned in the Evaluation Committee meeting in December, and that the corresponding CPE report will be finalised by that time.

13. Moreover, it was clarified that the 2007 OE budget includes, as recommended by the Board during its 88<sup>th</sup> session, the implementation of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) recommendation in relation to the increase in OE General Service staff salaries.

14. Finally, the Committee noted that the proposed increase in the budget is driven by the increased scope of OE's 2007 planned annual work programme containing evaluations that in the view of the Committee are all essential for achieving the objective of IFAD's independent evaluation function.

15. **Annual Report on the Results and Impact of IFAD Operations (ARRI).** The Committee found the ARRI to be a very clear and useful report. It particularly appreciated the introduction of the target score for benchmarking purposes to illustrate how such a target rate can be used to track and improve IFAD performance. The Committee also found interesting the range of issues raised in the ARRI and made various useful suggestions for further improving the reader-friendliness of the ARRI, which OE will take into consideration in preparing the next ARRIs.

16. The Committee invited OE to exercise a differentiated judgement, reflecting the diversity of institutions, while assessing the overall performance of governments. In particular, one member commented the need to devote due attention to assessing government institutions' overall efforts in promoting pro-poor policies as a key aspect in determining their performance.

17. On another matter, the Committee's attention was drawn to the need for IFAD to make concerted efforts towards improving project and programme sustainability, especially as this has been raised repeatedly in the past by the ARRIs and other evaluations. The Committee welcomes the ARRI's proposal for IFAD to organise a wider debate on the topic of sustainability in the near future.

18. One member noted the need to make more efforts towards reducing the time elapsed between loan approval and effectiveness, as greater time intervals between approval and effectiveness can increase the administrative costs spent on getting projects off the ground.

19. Similarly, there was much discussion on project and programme-level monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems. It was noted that this is an area that IFAD has been grappling with for many years, and that ways and means need to be found to seriously enhance the performance of M&E systems together with other partners.

20. This is fundamental, given the centrality of M&E systems, *inter-alia*, for project management, reporting, impact assessment and knowledge sharing. On this point, OE acknowledged that the Fund needs to renew its efforts towards enhancing M&E systems, engaging a variety of stakeholders including those from partner countries in this important debate.

21. One member underlined the usefulness for IFAD to devote attention during policy dialogue to promoting post-project sustainability and institutional reform, which should take into close consideration the overall institutional, political and social environment in the project area.

22. On another subject, the Committee recommended that, while it is important for IFAD to strengthen the involvement of NGOs in its operations, the Fund should devote sufficient resources towards the broader capacity building of NGOs in partner countries.

23. The Committee chairman noted that his Government had some specific comments on the ARRI, with respect to selected references to evaluations undertaken in Mexico. However, he conveyed that these comments would be discussed bi-laterally with OE. He also took the chance to highlight the importance of learning from each others experiences, and in this regard, shared an example from Mexico in relation to financing for small farmers.

24. Among other issues, the Assistant President of PMD conveyed that the IFAD management found the report of high quality and a useful tool for accountability and learning purposes. He recalled that a written management response to the main issues and recommendations in the ARRI will be provided to the Committee and Board in December 2006, within the framework of the Portfolio Performance Report. He also informed that Committee that, in light of the importance of the ARRI, the management plans to organise in the near future an internal policy forum to engage a wider range of IFAD staff in discussing the ARRI's findings and recommendations.

25. **Other business.** Under this agenda item, as per the provisions contained in paragraph 47 of its terms of reference, the Committee decided that it would discuss the IFAD Supervision and Implementation Support Policy together with the comments of OE on the document at its 46<sup>th</sup> session, before the same is considered by the Executive Board in December 2006. In this regard, the Chairman highlighted that OE has undertaken in recent years two corporate level evaluations on supervision issues, namely the evaluation of IFAD's supervision modalities in 2003 and the evaluation of the Direct Supervision Pilot Programme in 2005. The latter was discussed by the Executive Board in September 2005, which also adopted the evaluation's Agreement at Completion Point.