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## **OE Support to Evaluation Capacity Development in Partner Countries**

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For: **Review**

## **Note to Evaluation Committee Members**

This document is submitted for review by the Evaluation Committee.

To make the best use of time available at Evaluation Committee sessions, members are invited to contact the following focal point with any technical questions about this document before the session:

**Luciano Lavizzari**

Director, Office of Evaluation  
telephone: +39 06 5459 2274  
e-mail: [l.lavizzari@ifad.org](mailto:l.lavizzari@ifad.org)

Queries regarding the dispatch of documentation for this session should be addressed to:

**Deirdre McGrenra**

Governing Bodies Officer  
telephone: +39 06 5459 2374  
e-mail: [d.mcgrenra@ifad.org](mailto:d.mcgrenra@ifad.org)

## OE Support to Evaluation Capacity Development in Partner Countries

1. **Purpose.** This concept note is being prepared in response to the Evaluation Committee<sup>1</sup> and Executive Board's request for the Office of Evaluation (OE) to develop an approach to support building evaluation capacity, recognizing the increasing importance of Evaluation Capacity Development (ECD) in partner countries.
2. **Background.** With the signing of the Paris Declaration for Aid Effectiveness in 2005, the international community expressed its commitment to strengthen country capacities. In this context, the establishment of country-level evaluation systems responds to the objective of enhancing the ownership of national governments with regard to the country development process as well as their accountability to achieving their development objectives, especially those related to the Millennium Development Goals.
3. ECD entails the strengthening of evaluation systems (both in terms of methods and processes) and the development of corresponding human resources so that evaluation is regularly conducted and utilized for decision making. Evaluation outfits of international organisations such as all the multilateral development banks and select United Nations agencies (e.g. the United Nations Development Programme) are engaged in various initiatives for improving the evaluation capacity of partner countries. These range from those aimed at improving evaluation capacity of individuals (through dedicated trainings and support to evaluation associations) to broader actions addressing country institutional and legislative framework.
4. **Rationale.** The engagement of OE in ECD is in line with the objective, established in the IFAD Evaluation Policy, of fostering the involvement of partner countries stakeholders in the evaluation process for improving the ownership and utilisation of evaluation knowledge<sup>2</sup>. In line with the mandate and comparative advantage of the Fund, OE is well positioned to support partner countries in their effort of building evaluation systems with a specific focus on the instruments and methods required for the evaluation of agriculture and rural sector development projects, programmes and policies. OE has developed a comprehensive methodology and process for evaluating agriculture and rural development activities and as a result is well positioned to support ECD on these topics.
5. **OE Experience with ECD.** OE is already contributing to ECD, even though the activities undertaken in the past have not been explicitly referred to as ECD. For example, partners involved in evaluations of IFAD-funded operations at the country level are able to build their knowledge on evaluation methodology and processes by being involved in evaluations undertaken by OE. Moreover, the existing instruments used by OE in conducting evaluations, such as the Core Learning Partnership (CLP), provide opportunities for sharing of evaluation knowledge, methods, practices and approaches, thereby contributing to ECD.
6. In 2008 and 2009, OE's experience in India and China has highlighted the interest by some country governments towards building their evaluation capacity in the agriculture and rural sector. More specifically, in the context of the India Country Programme Evaluation (CPE), building on a request from the Government of India, a preliminary study was prepared to map out the landscape of existing ECD activities and the potential role that IFAD could play in the future. A dialogue with the Government is being planned to determine OE's possible involvement in the future. During the evaluation of the IFAD-financed Qinling Mountain Area Poverty

<sup>1</sup> The Committee requested that OE outline its approach to ECD at its 57th session in July 2009 and OE agreed to present an overview for discussion in the Committee's December 2009 session.

<sup>2</sup> See IFAD Evaluation Policy (2003), page 6, section on partnership.

Alleviation Project in China, ECD was part of the evaluation process: two government representatives participated in key phases of the evaluation as observers, who gained on-the-job training on data collection techniques and their application in the evaluation of ARD programs. In addition, OE led a seminar on the evaluation of agriculture and rural development projects at the 2009 October Shanghai International Programme for Development Evaluation Training (SHIPDET)<sup>3</sup>.

7. Moreover, in 2008, OE was approached by the Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) at the World Bank in the context of a large programme for strengthening regional centres for evaluation capacity building (in Asia, Africa and Latin America). This programme, initiated by the Bank, is being undertaken in partnership with evaluation outfits of various bilateral and multilateral organisations, such as the African Development Bank and DFID. The objective of this programme is to strengthen the capacities of regional centres, to better equip them to provide demand-based capacity building, knowledge and advisory services in evaluation of development projects and programmes. Specifically, OE has been asked to provide support to the centre in China, which hosts SHIPDET and to one of the Centres in Africa given the importance of agriculture to the region.
8. **Objectives.** The future engagement of OE in ECD should aim at enhancing the capabilities of government oversight authorities (such as the evaluation units in the ministry of planning or ministry of finance) as well as those of evaluators (individual and association of evaluators, research centres, etc.) to undertake rigorous and credible evaluations of domestically and internationally financed programmes in the agriculture and rural development sector. This engagement will be based on the below principles.
9. **Principles of Engagement.** The following principles of engagement for OE on ECD are identified: (i) OE should engage in ECD in a phased manner in order to optimise available resources and maximise learning from experience; (ii) how ECD initiatives implemented by OE should be undertaken within the framework of evaluations planned in its annual work programme, (iii) OE will engage in ECD only if this is grounded in the explicit request and interest for capacity building by partner countries; (iv) OE engagement in ECD should not affect the principle of independence enshrined in the IFAD Evaluation Policy<sup>4</sup>, (v) given the increasing involvement of other (often larger) donors in providing ECD support, the engagement of OE in ECD needs to be complementary to the work of others based on the comparative advantage of the Fund in agriculture and rural development sector.
10. A final important precondition for engagement of OE in ECD is the partnership with Programme Management Department (PMD). Given that in the long run, capacity building (including evaluation capacity building) for country government is an operational function, all activities expected to be undertaken within this programme will require consultation and agreement with PMD and should be in line with the priorities and need of the IFAD country programme in the ECD recipient country. In addition, while OE can contribute to the design and launching of ECD initiatives, PMD's engagement is required to ensure IFAD long-term of commitments to this programme as well as its continued relevance for IFAD-financed operations.
11. **Approach.** In addition to supporting ECD through its regular evaluation processes, OE will partner with existing training centres with the aim of providing demand-based knowledge and advisory services on evaluation. OE will promote dedicated capacity building initiatives targeted to members of government oversight and

<sup>3</sup> SHIPDET is a regional training programme on evaluation and is co sponsored by Asia Pacific Finance Development Centre (AFDC), Government of China, Asian Development Bank and the World Bank.

<sup>4</sup> For example, OE will not provide technical assistance to improving project-level M&E systems which is an operational function.

evaluation authorities, network of evaluators, evaluation associations, individual evaluators, research centres, etc. In line with the rationale described above, OE will promote capacity building initiatives focusing exclusively on the methodologies and techniques applicable to the evaluation of development operations in the rural and agriculture sector.

12. Partnership will be sought with centres already engaged in providing evaluation capacity building services at the regional level. In this way, it will maximise the reach of OE's ECD initiative in a cost-effective manner and will allow OE to respond to the demand for capacity building from various countries and contexts. In addition, OE engagement with these training centres will allow OE to explore complementarities and synergies with the global programme launched by IEG for strengthening regional centres for evaluation capacity building described in paragraph 7.
13. **Activities.** As requested by the Board, OE's engagement in ECD will be commensurate with its priorities and available resources. Because of the novelty of the ECD instruments presented above, a staged approach will therefore be followed. For 2010, OE will strengthen its partnership with one training centre, namely, the Asia Pacific Finance and Development Center (AFDC) in Shanghai. As mentioned above, this centre already serves as evaluation knowledge provider and is currently in charge of the organisation of the SHIPDET whose outreach covers the Asia and the Pacific region. In the context of OE partnership with the AFCD, OE will organise a training session on evaluation criteria and methods applicable to the agriculture and rural development sector. Consideration will be given to the possibility of attaching this session to an existing capacity building programme therefore ensuring cost savings and complementarity with other training topics.
14. In addition to that, OE will continue its engagement in ECD in the context of regular evaluation processes and will reach out to existing national evaluation associations to partake in the CLP. For example, OE will continue partnering with government oversight authorities to provide on the job training during evaluation field work.
15. **Resource implications.** The implementation of the ECD programme for 2010 will have minor implications on the allocation of OE human resources with no additional financial implications. In 2010 OE programme of work, staff time will be allocated to prepare and delivery the one-day training workshop on evaluation methods for ARD sector to be undertaken in fall 2010 in Shanghai. Supplementary funds will be used for financing the recruitment of resource persons to assist OE in the preparation of training materials.
16. **Medium term engagement.** OE will thoroughly assess the quality of the engagement with AFDC<sup>5</sup> and of the support given through ongoing evaluations. Based on these lessons-learned and suggestions contained in the final report of the External Peer Review Panel of OE and IFAD's Evaluation Function in April 2010, OE will reassess its engagement in ECD while preparing its next work programme (2011-2013) and budget for 2011.

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<sup>5</sup> This may be done through a course-evaluation questionnaire to be distributed to training attendants.