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Enabling poor rural people  
to overcome poverty

## **Office of Evaluation support to evaluation capacity development in partner countries**

Evaluation Committee — Sixty-first Session  
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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:

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## Office of Evaluation support to evaluation capacity development in partner countries

1. **Purpose.** In recognition of the increasing importance of evaluation capacity development (ECD) in partner countries, the Evaluation Committee<sup>1</sup> and the Executive Board requested the Office of Evaluation (OE) to develop an approach to evaluation capacity development in partner countries. This concept note presents an overview for discussion by the Evaluation Committee.
2. **Background.** With the signing of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness in 2005, the international community expressed its commitment to strengthening country capacities. In this context, the establishment of country-level evaluation systems supports the objective of enhancing national governments' ownership of the country development process and their accountability in terms of achieving national development objectives, especially those related to the Millennium Development Goals.
3. ECD entails strengthening evaluation systems (in terms of both methods and processes) and the corresponding human resources to ensure that evaluation is regularly conducted and utilized for decision-making. The evaluation offices of all the multilateral development banks and certain United Nations agencies (e.g. the United Nations Development Programme) are engaged in initiatives to improve the evaluation capacity of partner countries. These range from initiatives for capacity-building of individuals through special training and support to evaluation associations, to broader actions addressing the country's institutional and legislative framework.
4. **Rationale.** OE's engagement in ECD is in line with the objective – established in the IFAD Evaluation Policy – of fostering the involvement of partner country stakeholders in the evaluation process to improve country ownership and use of evaluation knowledge.<sup>2</sup> IFAD's mandate and comparative advantage mean that OE is well-positioned to support partner countries in building evaluation systems and can provide a specific focus on the instruments and methods required to evaluate agriculture and rural sector projects, programmes and policies. OE has developed a comprehensive methodology and process for evaluating agriculture and rural development activities that can serve as a solid framework for ECD on these topics in partner countries.
5. **OE's experience with ECD.** OE is already contributing to such capacity-building, even though the activities undertaken 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 expand their knowledge of evaluation methodology and processes by working on evaluations undertaken by OE. Moreover, the instruments OE uses in conducting evaluations, such as the core learning partnership, provide opportunities to share 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 of some governments in building their evaluation capacity in the agriculture and rural sector. More specifically, in the context of the India country programme evaluation (CPE), a preliminary study was prepared, following a request by the Government of India, to map out existing ECD activities and the potential role that IFAD could play in the future. A dialogue with the Government is planned regarding OE's possible involvement in this respect. ECD was part of the process in the evaluation of the IFAD-financed Qinling Mountain Area Poverty-Alleviation Project in

<sup>1</sup> At the fifty-seventh session of the Committee in July 2009, the Office of Evaluation (OE) was requested to outline its approach to ECD. OE agreed to present an overview for discussion at the Committee's session in December 2009.

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

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

7. In 2008, OE was approached by the Independent Evaluation Group 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 the evaluation offices of various bilateral and multilateral organizations, such as the African Development Bank and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID). The objective of this programme is to better equip regional centres to provide demand-based capacity-building, knowledge and advisory services in the 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.** In its future engagement in ECD, OE should aim at enhancing the capabilities of government oversight authorities (such as evaluation units in ministries of planning or finance) and those of evaluators (individual evaluators and associations, 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 principles below.
9. **Principles of engagement.** OE has identified the following principles of engagement for ECD: (i) OE should engage in ECD in a phased manner in order to optimize use of available resources and maximize learning from experience; (ii) ECD initiatives implemented by OE should be undertaken within the framework of evaluations planned in its annual work programme; (iii) OE should engage in ECD only on the explicit request and expressed interest of partner countries; (iv) OE engagement in ECD should not affect the principle of independence enshrined in the IFAD Evaluation Policy;<sup>4</sup> and (v) given the increasing involvement of other (often larger) donors in providing ECD support, OE's engagement in ECD should complement the work of other agencies and should be based on IFAD's comparative advantage in agriculture and the rural development sector.
10. The final important precondition for OE engagement in ECD is partnership with the Programme Management Department (PMD). Given that in the long run, capacity-building (including evaluation capacity-building) for governments is an operational function, all activities planned under this programme will require consultation and agreement with PMD and should be in line with the priorities and needs of the IFAD country programme in the ECD recipient country. In addition, while OE can contribute to designing and launching ECD initiatives, PMD's engagement is required to ensure long-term commitment and continued relevance for IFAD-financed operations.
11. **Approach.** In addition to supporting ECD through its regular evaluation processes, OE will partner with training centres with the aim of providing demand-based knowledge and advisory services on evaluation. OE will promote special capacity-building initiatives targeted at members of governments' oversight and evaluation authorities, networks of evaluators, evaluation associations, individual evaluators, research centres, etc. In line with the rationale described above, OE will promote

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

<sup>4</sup> For example, OE will not provide technical assistance to improve project-level monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems as this is an operational function.

capacity-building initiatives focused exclusively on methodologies and techniques applicable to evaluating development operations in the rural and agriculture sector.

12. Partnerships will be sought with centres already providing evaluation capacity-building services at the regional level. This will maximize the reach of OE's ECD initiative in a cost-effective manner and will allow OE to respond to capacity-building demand in various countries and contexts. In addition, OE's engagement with these training centres will allow it to identify complementarities and synergies with the global programme launched by the Independent Evaluation Group for strengthening regional centres for evaluation capacity-building (described in paragraph 7).
13. Enhancing M&E capacity is also an integral part of building broad-based evaluation knowledge and skills at the country level. Developing and supporting M&E activities are primarily an operations function. However given that M&E, particularly at the project level, is a systemic challenge in many countries, OE will work with PMD to improve this aspect in IFAD-funded projects.
14. **Activities.** As requested by the Board, OE's engagement in ECD will be commensurate with its priorities and available resources. As the instruments for ECD are new, a stage-by-stage approach will be followed. In 2010, OE will strengthen its partnership with one training centre, namely, AFDC in Shanghai. As mentioned above, this centre already acts as an evaluation knowledge provider and is currently in charge of organizing SHIPDET, whose outreach covers the Asia and the Pacific region. In the context of partnership with AFCD, OE will organize a training session on evaluation criteria and methods applicable to the agriculture and rural development sector. The possibility of linking this session to an existing capacity-building programme will be explored to achieve cost savings and complementarity with other training topics.
15. In addition, OE will continue to engage in ECD in the context of regular evaluation processes and will reach out to national evaluation associations to participate in the core learning partnership. For example, OE will continue partnering with government oversight authorities to provide on-the-job training during evaluation field work.
16. **Resource implications.** The implementation of the ECD programme for 2010 will have minor implications for the allocation of OE human resources and no financial implications. In OE's 2010 programme of work, staff time will be allocated to preparing and delivering the one-day training workshop on evaluation methods for the agriculture and rural development sector to be undertaken in Shanghai in the second half of 2010. Supplementary funds will be used to finance the recruitment of resource persons to assist OE in the preparation of training materials.
17. **Medium-term engagement.** OE will thoroughly assess the quality of the engagement with AFDC<sup>5</sup> and of the support provided through ongoing evaluations. Based on these lessons learned and the suggestions contained in the final report of the external peer review of OE and IFAD's evaluation function in April 2010, OE will reassess its engagement in ECD when preparing its next work programme (2011-2013) and budget for 2011.

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<sup>5</sup> This may be done by distributing a questionnaire among training participants.