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Enabling poor rural people
to overcome poverty

Management response to the corporate-level evaluation on IFAD's performance with regard to gender equality and women's empowerment

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Abbreviations and acronyms

HRD	Human Resources Division
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
PMD	Programme Management Department

Management response to the corporate-level evaluation on IFAD's performance with regard to gender equality and women's empowerment

I. Background and introduction

1. IFAD Management welcomes the corporate-level evaluation on IFAD's performance with regard to gender equality and women's empowerment, which was undertaken in response to a decision of the Consultation on the Eighth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources. While acknowledging the collaborative spirit with which the IFAD Office of Evaluation (IOE) has conducted this evaluation, Management would like to underscore that this response was constrained by the limited time available between receipt of the evaluation report and submission of this document.¹
2. This response presents Management's views on some strategic issues and proposes a way forward in implementing the recommendations agreed on by Management.

II. Overall assessment of findings and quality of the report

3. Management has noted the evaluation's finding that IFAD's performance on gender equality and women's empowerment is better in new projects and programmes than in older operations, and it endorses, to a large extent, the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report. Management considers the report to be a useful document which, together with the working papers, provides a good basis for taking further action. Its findings are in line with the findings from Management's self-assessment. Management also feels, however, that the country case studies were underresourced and, as a result, are insufficient in terms of presenting the key factors of success or failure of country programmes and projects in addressing gender issues. In general, more justice could have been done to the wealth of experience available at the field level. Consequently, the evaluation report primarily focuses on corporate issues of IFAD as an institution rather than on the outputs and outcomes of IFAD-funded projects with respect to gender equality and women's empowerment. The study could have presented more evidence in terms of the assessment of IFAD's strategic engagement in related global policy processes.
4. IFAD does not do enough to document and disseminate its field experiences in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. In spite of this, as noted in the evaluation report, IFAD-funded projects stand out compared with those of other international financial institutions. It is interesting to note that scores based only on the desk reviews of project documentation are lower than those obtained when the actual experiences are directly examined, as in the country case studies. This suggests that, in many cases, IFAD does better on the ground than can be discerned from the review of documents at headquarters. Relatively weaker results on the third strategic objective – improving women's well-being and easing their workloads by facilitating access to basic rural services and infrastructure – and human resources-related gender issues contribute to the final rating of performance as "moderately satisfactory". There is therefore no room for complacency and IFAD needs to improve its efforts, with enhanced commitment, instruments and resources. IFAD Management is committed to take on this challenge, mobilizing the resources and promoting the institutional changes needed to do so.
5. The evaluation notes that although gender-related documents are broadly consistent with the goal of improving gender equality and women's empowerment, IFAD's strategic approach and corresponding guidance are fragmented into different

¹ Management received the final version of the report on 3 November 2010.

documents. Management generally endorses this finding; it also recognizes that IFAD needs to take on the challenge of developing a better set of indicators to measure impact and results in gender equality and women's empowerment. Management believes that it is important to develop a common understanding in IFAD of basic principles and concepts. On the issue of relatively weaker performance on gender with regard to the third strategic objective, Management would like to clarify that success in this domain is contingent on investments that are often outside IFAD's remit (i.e. outside of agriculture and rural development) and need to be funded by partners. Nevertheless, IFAD can and will do better, including by finding the right partners. Management also realizes that synergies between economic and productive investments and with basic human services (health and education) are essential to the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment. IFAD's future strategy will be geared to further clarifying the actions needed and partnering with governments and other donors in achieving better results against this objective.

6. IFAD Management has noted the evaluation finding of good efforts made by IFAD – better than those of other international financial institutions – to improve operational processes in order to strengthen its gender-related work. It also notes that these efforts have led to results on the ground that are more substantial than those of other development organizations. It has also taken note of the variance in IFAD performance on gender issues between projects and within IFAD's own management structure. The report identifies some causes of this variance (paragraph 216) but could have gone even further in identifying the underlying reasons for such uneven progress (strong in some cases, weak in others).
7. IFAD's own human resource management and corporate culture are identified as the greatest challenges in IFAD's gender equality and women's empowerment work (paragraph 219). IFAD Management recognizes that gender diversity – as well as diversity in age and nationality – is necessary to increase organizational effectiveness. In this light, Management agrees that IFAD needs to equip itself with the instruments and resources needed to promote gender equality in its human resources policies.
8. IFAD Management has taken note of the finding that, while IFAD's gender architecture is appropriate on the whole, it needs to be reviewed to achieve greater clarity and accountability. It also concurs with the finding that it is difficult to track the resources allocated to gender, a challenge shared by other international agencies. Nevertheless, IFAD will seek better ways to do this. However, the statement regarding IFAD's excessive dependence on supplementary funding does not appear to be sufficiently evidence-based. Rather, IFAD has indeed mobilized supplementary funds for gender work and has allocated its own resources to this purpose. This is a strength, in Management's view, not a weakness.

III. Way forward

9. The corporate-level evaluation on IFAD's performance with regard to gender equality and women's empowerment was undertaken in the light of the following decision by the Eighth Replenishment Consultation:

"The independent Office of Evaluation will conduct an evaluation of IFAD's performance on gender equality and women's empowerment in 2009. Based on the findings of the evaluation, the Executive Board will consider the need to develop a corporate policy and implementation strategy on gender."
10. With respect to the corporate policy and implementation strategy, while IFAD Management will be guided by the Executive Board as per the decision of the Consultation quoted above, it has noted the evaluation's recommendation that "an overarching evidence- and results-based corporate policy on gender equality and women's empowerment be developed by Management for submission to the

Executive Board in 2011.” Further, the evaluation recommends that this document should cover not only operations, but also other key corporate business processes such as human resource management, communications, finance and budget.

11. Management will implement this recommendation if it is endorsed by the Executive Board. Such a policy document could clarify basic concepts and would need to be operational in terms of identifying responsibilities, actions and resources. The policy could be accompanied by a results framework (paragraph 236) and an implementation strategy that were well integrated within and supportive of IFAD’s systems. This would need to be developed through a participatory and consultative process. In the development of this policy, the following issues would also need to be reviewed and addressed:
 - (a) Promoting performance on gender equality and women’s empowerment in job descriptions and work planning/performance management within IFAD;
 - (b) Promoting gender balance in staffing, including in IFAD country offices and at IFAD headquarters;
 - (c) Ensuring work-life balance within IFAD;
 - (d) Investing more in managing knowledge, enhancing learning and undertaking analytic work, and engaging in policy dialogue and advocacy related to gender issues, both directly and through enhanced partnerships; and
 - (e) Developing a coherent framework for business processes already in place to further IFAD’s work on gender equality and women’s empowerment.
12. In the process of preparing the policy, depending on the decision of the Executive Board, IFAD would also:
 - (a) Review the need for the Executive Board and Senior Management to lead and oversee issues related to gender equality, and propose ways and means for strengthening their capacity and roles in this area (paragraph 235, first bullet); and
 - (b) Undertake a comprehensive review of IFAD’s overall gender architecture, including: oversight functions at Management level; required profiles, location and numbers of dedicated gender positions in the Programme Management Department (PMD) and other divisions, including the Human Resources Division (HRD); redefinition of the role of gender focal points and allocation of adequate resources for this function; and role and structure of the Thematic Group on Gender.
13. In its efforts to improve the effectiveness and impact of IFAD’s country operations, IFAD will continue to implement the Framework for Gender Mainstreaming which remains valid for operations until replaced by a new corporate policy. IFAD will continue to pursue more vigorously the current positive trends identified in the evaluation report. Towards this end, it will continue to improve gender-responsiveness in project design and implementation. It will continue to include gender expertise in project-cycle-related missions, in project management and country presence structures. IFAD will make the best use of the opportunities offered by its new operating model, primarily through direct supervision and increased country presence. It will seek to improve its capacity to learn more on gender equality and women’s empowerment through existing knowledge management processes, and its monitoring and reporting systems, including the Results and Impact Management System (RIMS) and project logical frameworks. IFAD will also continue to implement the four commitments it made relative to the third Millennium Development Goal (MDG3 – the promotion of gender equality) when receiving the Global MDG3 Champion Torch, for which divisions and units have been asked to renew their action plans for 2011. On the occasion of the October 2011 review of progress made in fulfilling Torch commitments, an award

will be given to the division that has made the most progress. In relation to important opportunities over the next 18 months, IFAD will continue to provide leadership within global policy processes to advance the gender equality and empowerment of rural women.

14. The President of IFAD will continue to play a leadership role on this issue. While awaiting the review of IFAD's gender architecture, IFAD's Executive Management Committee will nominate a member of the Operations Management Committee as responsible, under the leadership of the President, for implementation, oversight and reporting on gender equality and women's empowerment within IFAD.
15. IFAD will take more steps to strengthen its institutional capacity. Starting in early 2011, it will more systematically include a gender perspective in training activities to be undertaken on operational aspects (PMD-organized) and on key competencies. PMD (for operational training) and HRD (for competency training) will submit a plan to this effect by end-January 2011. In addition, Management will nominate a senior staff member in HRD to oversee the development of a gender and diversity strategy that will be part of the corporate gender policy, in line with the target set under IFAD's current Results Measurement Framework. This will aim at identifying measures that can improve gender balance and promote a culture that values diversity. IFAD will also strengthen corporate reports such as the Report on IFAD's Development Effectiveness (RIDE) to report on its gender performance. In addition, it will introduce gender as one of the "big bets" in IFAD's corporate innovation agenda² until 2015 (target year for the MDGs). IFAD will also support innovative approaches, and their scaling up, by building partnerships with regional knowledge centres of excellence on this theme.

² The innovation evaluation recommended that an IFAD-wide innovation agenda be developed at the corporate level, consisting of a few selected themes or domains. The themes or domains selected – "big bets" – should be in those areas of the agriculture and rural sector where there is a proven need for innovative solutions and where IFAD has (or can develop) a comparative advantage to successfully promote pro-poor innovations that can be scaled up.