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Enabling poor rural people
to overcome poverty

Draft minutes of the sixty-fifth session of the Evaluation Committee

Note to Evaluation Committee members

Focal points:

Technical questions:

Luciano Lavizzari
Director, Office of Evaluation
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2274
e-mail: l.lavizzari@ifad.org

Dispatch of documentation:

Deirdre McGrenra
Governing Bodies Officer
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2374
e-mail: gb_office@ifad.org

Evaluation Committee — Sixty-sixth Session
Rome, 3 March 2011

For: Approval

Draft minutes of the sixty-fifth session of the Evaluation Committee

1. These minutes cover the deliberations of the Evaluation Committee during its sixty-fifth session held on 25 and 26 November 2010. The six agenda items for discussion were: (i) minutes of the sixty-fourth session of the Evaluation Committee; (ii) 2010 Annual Report on Results and Impact of IFAD Operations (ARRI); (iii) corporate-level evaluation (CLE) on IFAD's performance with regard to gender equality and women's empowerment; (iv) provisional agenda of the Evaluation Committee for 2011; (v) progress report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Peer Review of IFAD's Office of Evaluation (IOE) and Evaluation Function; and (vi) Report on IFAD's Development Effectiveness (RIDE). The Evaluation Committee approved the proposal made by IFAD Management at the beginning of the session not to discuss the item on IFAD's engagement with middle-income countries, which will instead be included in the agenda for the Evaluation Committee session of 25 February 2011.
2. All Committee members attended the session, which was chaired by Egypt. The Chairperson was Dr Essam Othman Fayed, who has been designated as IFAD Board member by the Government of Egypt to replace Dr Abdel Aziz Mohamed Hosni. The Committee welcomed Mr Kent Vachon who participated on behalf of Ms Adair Heuchan from Canada. The Committee also welcomed Mr Diego Simancas from Mexico, which has replaced Brazil as a Committee member. Two IOE consultants also joined the session for the items respectively on the ARRI¹ and on the CLE on gender equality and women's empowerment.²
3. The Committee was joined by IFAD's Associate Vice-President, Programmes, Programme Management Department (PMD); the Chief Development Strategist; the Director, IOE; the Secretary of IFAD; the Director of the Strategic Planning Division; and other IFAD staff.

A. Draft minutes of the sixty-fourth session of the Evaluation Committee

4. The Committee discussed the minutes of the sixty-fourth session of the Evaluation Committee (EC 2010/65/W.P.2), presented for approval. With regard to paragraph 9, it was decided to remove the word "more" from points (i) and (iv). With this change, the Committee approved the minutes of its sixty-fourth session.

B. 2010 Annual Report on Results and Impact of IFAD Operations (ARRI)

5. The Evaluation Committee discussed the eighth edition of the ARRI, together with Management's response thereon, as contained in the addendum (EC 2010/65/W.P.3/Add.1).
6. The Committee welcomed this year's report, including its new features, in particular, the increased focus on the "why" factor, the introduction of a chapter on non-lending activity and the analysis of efficiency. Overall, members supported the report's recommendations.
7. Members expressed concern about the performance of IFAD-funded projects against some evaluation criteria, such as efficiency, natural resource management and environment, and sustainability. They underlined the need for continued efforts to improve performance in these areas.

¹ Mr Michael Flint, team leader.

² Ms Rieky Stuart, team leader.

8. The Committee noted that efficiency (including institutional efficiency) is a major challenge, pointing out that the ARRI chapter on efficiency dealt more with challenges than solutions for improving performance. The Committee looked forward to the CLE on efficiency, which should provide deeper insights into the subject and identify solutions to enhance the Fund's performance in this important area. Members also underlined that a "one size fits all" approach may not be appropriate, and that a focus on the context is important in addressing this issue.
9. The Committee underlined that government performance has a critical impact on how a project performs. In this regard, members encouraged IFAD to develop partnerships with other agencies in order to strengthen government capacity, given IFAD's limited country presence, which constrains its capacity-building efforts. The Committee commented that IFAD Management should take a more proactive approach in providing governments with capacity-building support, given that IFAD is widely considered by governments as a well-respected partner.
10. Members found that the performance of projects in sub-Saharan Africa gave cause for concern, and invited Management to address this in a concerted manner. They also noted that engagement with the private sector has been insufficient, adding that this topic could be discussed in greater depth in the context of the CLE of IFAD's Private Sector Development and Partnership Strategy early next year.
11. Committee members expressed concern about the performance of past projects in the domain of natural resources and the environment, and about the continuing weakness in this area. They noted that the forthcoming policy on the topic will be a useful contribution to improving future performance in natural resources and environment.
12. The Committee also sought clarifications on how IOE intends to address the issue of climate change in its evaluation work. In this regard, IOE clarified that dedicated indicators to capture the effects of climate change have been developed in collaboration with IFAD's Environment and Climate Division. These indicators have been included as part of the natural resource and environment impact domain in the IFAD Evaluation Manual. IOE agreed that these indicators may be fine-tuned as needed once they are actually applied in IOE evaluations, starting from 2011.
13. The Committee discussed the points raised by the ARRI in relation to the Results Measurement Framework, and noted that further discussion on this topic will be undertaken by the Executive Board.

C. CLE on IFAD's performance with regard to gender equality and women's empowerment

14. The Evaluation Committee discussed the CLE on IFAD's performance with regard to gender equality and women's empowerment undertaken by IOE (EB 2010/101/R.9). The Committee also had the opportunity to discuss the written response by IFAD Management prior to the Executive Board's consideration of the evaluation in December 2010 (EB 2010/101/R.9/Add.1).
15. The Committee welcomed the evaluation, noting that it was a comprehensive and well-written report, covering important operational and organizational aspects of gender equality and women's empowerment.
16. The Committee supported the evaluation's findings and recommendations, specifically the development of an evidence- and results-based IFAD corporate policy on gender, noting that preparation of the policy should involve IFAD-wide consultation to ensure ownership, also at implementation.
17. Committee members encouraged IFAD, in developing and implementing the new corporate policy, to pay special attention to partnerships with other development organizations, including the recently established United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women).

18. Concerning the operational aspects, Committee members noted the importance of measuring the level of investment and size of administrative budgets, as well as tracking and reporting results on gender equality and women's empowerment. They recognized that identifying the proportion of investments and administrative budgets allocated specifically to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment has been a challenge for other organizations as well. However, quantifying this was important in obtaining a clear picture of the total amount of resources invested by the Fund in the area and discerning whether adequate resources are being allocated, in light of the magnitude of the gender challenges faced in borrowing countries.
19. The Committee acknowledged that IFAD is doing better than its peers but pointed out that performance is only moderately satisfactory. In this regard, members urged IFAD to take advantage of and build upon the experience and good practices of bilateral agencies and other development partners in the realm of gender equality and women's empowerment.
20. In organizational terms, the Committee found culture change to be important and requested IFAD Management to prioritize the related areas in the ongoing IFAD human resources reform. Members also noted that human resources management and culture change issues should be treated as an integral component of the forthcoming corporate policy on gender.
21. Members encouraged IFAD to build on the positive momentum of this evaluation, including the development of a system to track results on gender equality from quality assurance to evaluation, human resources development, sensitization and gender-specific training. On the latter, the Committee emphasized the need for timely allocation of the necessary financial resources to allow this activity to be undertaken at the beginning of 2011. This would require Management to adopt a holistic approach and to plan from the outset.
22. The Committee welcomed the proposal on choosing gender as a "big bet" for IFAD's corporate innovation agenda. Members also noted that championing gender in this way would not curtail innovations emerging from the field, which IFAD should be open to adopting to address specific project and country challenges.
23. The Committee welcomed the organization of outreach events related to the gender evaluation in 2011, in particular a stakeholder workshop to be held in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and other multilateral development organizations. The Committee recommended the presentation of the evaluation report, together with the Management response, to the forthcoming Consultation on the Ninth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources in order to engage a wider group of IFAD Member States.
24. Members requested that, in future, terms of reference for CLEs – in the form of an evaluation approach paper – be presented to the Committee for review. The approach paper should also be attached to the final evaluation report as an annex. In this regard, the approach paper of the forthcoming CLE on efficiency will be discussed at the Committee session in February 2011.

D. Provisional agenda of the Evaluation Committee for 2011

25. The Committee discussed its proposed provisional agenda for 2011. As mentioned above, Committee members noted that the approach paper of the forthcoming CLE on efficiency will be discussed in February 2011 as will the middle-income countries document (EB 2010/101/R.14/Add.1). These documents will, therefore, be added to the related session agenda.
26. Members questioned the validity of discussing the year-two evaluations undertaken in Ghana and requested IOE to propose an alternative project evaluation for the July 2011 session. Based on IOE's proposal, the Committee decided to discuss, instead, the Dom Helder project evaluation undertaken by IOE in Brazil.

27. The Committee reiterated the importance of conducting country visits and requested a proposal from Management and IOE in this regard. Members highlighted the importance of visiting closed projects evaluated by IOE as well as ongoing operations. The proposal will be submitted to the February 2011 session of the Committee.
28. Concerning the proposed dates for the July 2011 session, the Committee decided to advance the session by one day, to be held on 12-13 July 2011.
29. Members decided to discuss the direct supervision and implementation support synthesis report at its October 2011 session.

E. Progress report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Peer Review of IFAD's Office of Evaluation and Evaluation Function

30. The Committee considered the progress report on the implementation of the Recommendations of the Peer Review (EC 2010/65/W.P.6). As decided at the Committee's sixty-fourth session and at its special session on 14 October 2010, the progress report contained a matrix showing the implementation status of each recommendation, together with more detailed information about action taken so far.
31. The Committee welcomed the additional information provided on the action plan matrix and the inclusion of suggestions made by the Committee at previous sessions. At the same time, Committee members requested more clarity in the presentation of the updates. It was agreed that the Committee would receive updated versions of the action plan matrix with changes tracked and completed recommendations highlighted.
32. The Committee was informed that Mr Bruce Murray had been engaged as the consultant to assist on this item, and will be available at future sessions to discuss the review with Committee members.
33. Concerning the deadline for the presentation of the costed action plan for the self-evaluation system, the Committee recognized that this item had been moved in order to take into account the revisions to the IFAD Evaluation Policy which would be prepared for the Board's consideration at its May 2011 session.
34. Members were informed that the draft Evaluation Policy will be distributed to the Committee on 11 February 2011, prior to the Evaluation Committee session planned for 25 February 2011.
35. The Committee decided that adequate time would be scheduled in its future sessions for further consideration of this item, and special sessions called as necessary. Members further requested that reporting to the Executive Board on progress with regard to the Peer Review's recommendations be undertaken through a separate Chairperson's report dedicated to this item, including specific reference to the advances made, the actions required by the Board and the Committee's associated recommendations.

F. Report on IFAD's Development Effectiveness (RIDE)

36. The Committee discussed the RIDE, together with the comments provided by IOE thereon (EB 2010/101/R.11/Add.1), prior to its consideration by the Executive Board in December 2010.
37. Members noted that the data on performance of IFAD-funded projects presented in this year's RIDE are broadly similar to data provided in the 2010 ARRI.

38. The Committee underlined the importance of efficiency, at both the project level and institutional level. Members concurred with IOE's comments that Management should concentrate in the future on improving efficiency, as this has been consistently one of the weakest performance areas.
39. The Committee highlighted the need to improve access to markets in order to enhance smallholder incomes, which needs to be considered in discussions related to the efficiency of IFAD-funded operations.
40. Moreover, the Committee underlined the importance of implementing the recommendations contained in paragraphs 10 and 11 of IOE's comments. These include the need to introduce a section into the RIDE identifying the main issues and priorities with regard to addressing areas of weak performance.
41. Members highlighted that the sustainability of projects remains weak, and will require continued and concerted action by the Fund.
42. The Committee was apprised of the high level of staff costs in IFAD's total administrative cost and the proposal Management has submitted with respect to strategic workforce planning in the 2011 programme of work and budget document (EB 2010/101/R.2/Rev.1) presented to the Executive Board for consideration in December 2010.

G. IFAD's engagement with Middle-Income Countries

43. Following an explanation provided by the Chief Development Strategist during the adoption of the agenda item, the Committee agreed to defer the discussion of IFAD's engagement with middle-income countries to its session in February 2011.

H. Other business

44. There were no topics raised for discussion under the other business agenda item.