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Enabling poor rural people
to overcome poverty

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

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Evaluation Committee — Sixty-eighth Session
Rome, 11-12 July 2011

For: Approval

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

1. These minutes cover deliberations of the Evaluation Committee during its sixty-seventh session held on 19-20 April 2011. Eight agenda items were discussed: (i) minutes of the sixty-sixth session; (ii) corporate-level evaluation of IFAD's Private-Sector Development and Partnership Strategy; (iii) progress report on the action plan for implementation of the findings and recommendations of the Peer Review of IFAD's Office of Evaluation and Evaluation Function; (iv) revised IFAD Evaluation Policy; (v) draft Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Evaluation Committee; (vi) IFAD Country Presence Policy and Strategy, together with the comments of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE); (vii) IFAD's Engagement with Middle-Income Countries, with IOE's oral comments; and (viii) other business.
2. All Committee members attended the session (Burkina Faso, Canada, France, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Mexico, the Netherlands and Nigeria, with France attending the deliberations via teleconferencing from Paris). Observers were present from Angola, Argentina, China, Egypt, Guatemala, Luxembourg and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.
3. The Committee was joined by IFAD's Associate Vice-President, Programmes, Programme Management Department (PMD); the Director of IOE; the Secretary of IFAD; the IFAD General Counsel; the Director of the Latin America and the Caribbean Division; and other IFAD staff. As requested by the Committee, Bruce Murray, consultant, also joined the session via teleconferencing for the discussion of the draft revised IFAD Evaluation Policy and of the progress report on the action plan for implementation of the findings and recommendations of the Peer Review of IFAD's Office of Evaluation and Evaluation Function.
4. Under "other business", the Committee agreed to include three sub-items for information or discussion: (i) an oral update on IOE's participation in the Evaluation Cooperation Group (ECG) of the Multilateral Development Banks; (ii) a briefing by PMD on the forthcoming 2011 country visit by the Committee to Brazil; and (iii) a discussion of IOE's interim evaluation of the Vegetable Oil Development Project in Uganda.

A. Minutes of the sixty-sixth session

5. The Committee discussed the draft minutes of its sixty-sixth session (EC 2011/67/W.P.2) presented for approval.
6. Commenting on paragraph 9 of the minutes, it was decided to amend the text to reflect the decision taken by the Committee at its sixty-sixth session to choose a low-income country for its country visit in 2013.
7. With this change, the Committee approved the minutes of its sixty-sixth session.

B. Corporate-level evaluation of IFAD's Private-Sector Development and Partnership Strategy

8. On this agenda item, the Committee decided to hold a special session of the Evaluation Committee on 9 May 2011 to discuss the IFAD Management response to the evaluation, to be followed by a discussion of the evaluation at the May 2011 session of the Board, as agreed.
9. The Committee also decided that its deliberations and recommendations on this agenda item, undertaken at both the sixty-seventh session and the special session, be reflected in a separate report by the Chairperson of the Committee to be submitted to the Board at its 102nd session in May 2011.

10. On a similar note, it was decided that the deliberations by the Committee on this agenda item be captured in the minutes of the sixth special session of the Evaluation Committee, to be submitted for review at the Committee's sixty-eighth session in July 2011.

C. Progress report on the action plan for implementation of the findings and recommendations of the Peer Review of IFAD's Office of Evaluation and Evaluation Function

11. The Committee considered the Progress report on the action plan for implementation of the findings and recommendations of the Peer Review of IFAD's Office of Evaluation and Evaluation Function (EC 2011/67/W.P.4) and noted with satisfaction that good progress has been made.

D. Revised IFAD Evaluation Policy

12. The Committee considered document EC 2011/67/W.P.5, the draft Revised IFAD Evaluation Policy, together with its corrigendum (EC 2011/67/W.P.5/Corr.1) and addendum, Consistency of the Draft Evaluation Policy and the Report of the Peer Review of IFAD's Office of Evaluation and Evaluation Function (EC 2011/67/W.P.5/Add.1).
13. The Committee was joined via video link by the consultant, Bruce Murray, to support the Committee's discussion of this item.
14. The Committee welcomed the draft revised policy, which was found to be well laid out and inclusive of the comments made by the Committee during its sixty-sixth session.
15. On the issue of the President's powers to overrule the decisions of the Director, IOE, in hiring staff, the Committee noted that, as IOE employees are also IFAD employees, the President would retain such powers. However, it also noted that if the steps outlined in paragraph 71(b) of the draft policy were followed in the appointment, the process outlined would provide an appropriate mechanism to overcome possible issues requiring the President to exercise this authority. The Committee also noted that paragraph 75 contained an omission and requested that the word "staff" be inserted as a correction.
16. On the issue of possible consultancy employment for the Director, IOE, after the end of tenure, the Committee requested that the policy include the principle of a "cooling-off period" during which former directors of IOE would be excluded from consultancy employment with IFAD. The extent of this period has yet to be decided; several options were mentioned, ranging from 6 to 18 months. Finally, it was noted that this principle should also foresee that, in exceptional circumstances, the Executive Board should be in a position to overrule the cooling-off period.
17. To conclude, the Committee recommended presentation of the draft revised IFAD Evaluation Policy for approval at the 102nd session of the Executive Board.

E. Draft Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Evaluation Committee

18. The Committee considered the draft revised Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Evaluation Committee (EC 2011/67/W.P.6), together with its corrigendum (EC 2011/67/W.P.6/Corr.1) and its addendum, Consistency of the Draft Terms of Reference for the Evaluation Committee and the Report of the Peer Review of IFAD's Office of Evaluation and Evaluation Function (EC 2011/67/W.P.6/Add.1).
19. In reviewing the document, the Committee requested that the layout be changed to present the draft terms of reference as the main text of the document, while attaching the transmittal notes as annex A, and that the transmittal notes be included in the submission to the Executive Board.

20. The Committee noted the corrigendum of section 2.7 of the draft terms of reference and requested that the word "meeting" be replaced with "meetings" in sections 2.6 and 2.7. The Committee also requested that disclosure of the Committee's minutes and reports be confirmed in the terms of reference. Moreover, in section 3.1(f), Committee members requested the deletion of the following phrases: "their Agreement at Completion Point or" and ", as applicable".
21. In conclusion, Committee members recommended that the Board approve the draft revised Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Evaluation Committee.

F. IFAD Country Presence Policy and Strategy

22. The Committee discussed the IFAD Country Presence Policy and Strategy (EC 2011/67/W.P.7), together with the comments provided by IOE (EC 2011/67/W.P.7/Add.1) and the Self-assessment report of the IFAD Country Presence Programme (EC 2011/67/W.P.7/Add.2), prior to its consideration by the Executive Board in May 2011.
23. The Committee noted that outposting of country programme managers (CPMs) by IFAD is important and should be addressed more systematically to achieve the proposed target of outposting CPMs within specific timelines.
24. The Committee encouraged IFAD to look for the best and less costly options when opening country offices. In addition, the Committee recommended that an exit strategy be defined in consultation with the government in those cases in which IFAD plans to close a particular country office.
25. The Committee advised the Fund to carefully identify and select the countries in which a country presence should be established in order to ensure the right balance between a presence in fragile states and in better-off countries.
26. The Committee also encouraged IFAD to define the necessary incentives and human resource policies to ensure the outposting of CPMs.
27. The Associate Vice-President, Programmes, provided clarifications on some of the issues raised by Committee members.
28. He noted that IFAD relies on other United Nations agencies' facilities when considering opening a country office, given that such agencies usually provide office space at a more competitive cost than the multilateral development banks.
29. With regard to the incentives and human resource policies required for outposting, the Associate Vice-President informed the Committee that a dedicated chapter on country presence has been introduced in the draft revised IFAD Human Resources Policy Manual, specifying roles and entitlements of field office staff.

G. IFAD's Engagement with Middle-Income Countries

30. The Committee discussed and welcomed the draft proposal on IFAD's Engagement with Middle-Income Countries (MICs) (EC 2011/67/W.P.8), together with the oral comments provided by IOE, prior to its consideration by the Executive Board in May 2011. In addition, the Committee recognized the efforts made by Management to take into account the comments provided by Board members at the informal seminar in March 2011.
31. The Committee noted that IFAD should continue its focus on rural poverty reduction in the allocation of its financial resources.
32. The Committee noted that, once the agreed threshold has been reached, following discussions between IFAD and the concerned member government, a proposal for graduation from IFAD lending and services would be defined on a voluntary basis. In the event that a country no longer borrows from IFAD, the Committee noted that it will continue to be eligible for other IFAD services, some of which might be reimbursable.

33. The Committee recommended defining a customized list of services to be provided by IFAD to graduated MICs on a reimbursable basis, and services to be provided free of charge.
34. The Committee underlined the importance of IFAD further strengthening its knowledge management capabilities in order to ensure that its experience in small-scale agriculture and rural development can be made readily and appropriately available to all developing countries, as well as to any other country, for their own rural poverty reduction or assistance efforts. This requires well-defined mechanisms and instruments, which should be accompanied by an adequate level of resources.
35. The Committee noted that South-South cooperation is important, while at the same time underlining that other forms of cooperation are also useful.
36. Responding to the issues raised by Committee members, the Associate Vice-President, Programmes, emphasized the good progress made by IFAD in addressing its engagement with MICs. In particular, he underlined the knowledge and policy services IFAD is providing to these countries. With regard to the graduation policy, the Associate Vice-President emphasized that a rise in the per capita income level of a given country above a particular threshold does not mean an automatic cut-off, and that the IFAD Executive Board would need to discuss the types of services to be provided to such countries. Concerning South-South cooperation, the Associate Vice-President informed Committee members that IFAD is currently in the process of preparing a related paper to be submitted to the third session of the Consultation on the Ninth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources.

H. Other business

37. Three topics were discussed under this agenda item. First, the Committee was briefed by the Director, IOE, on IOE's participation in the Evaluation Cooperation Group (ECG) of the Multilateral Development Banks.
38. The Committee congratulated IOE for its commitment and active role in the ECG. In particular, it expressed appreciation for the production of the agriculture and agribusiness evaluation synthesis to which IOE was a major contributor, as well as for the lead role taken by IOE in production of the forthcoming ECG evaluation synthesis on gender.
39. The Committee was also informed that, in a forthcoming session, IOE will brief members on its participation in the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG).
40. Second, PMD briefed the Committee on the forthcoming country visit to Brazil. The Committee expressed its appreciation for the information.
41. Third, the Committee discussed the date of issuance of the interim evaluation report on the Vegetable Oil Development Project in Uganda, given that the evaluation was discussed in the Committee in July 2010. In this regard, IOE clarified that the report was issued in March 2011 because the agreement at completion point (ACP) was only signed by the Government of Uganda in February 2011, following discussions between IFAD Management and the Government on implementation of the recommendations of the evaluation.
42. In this regard, IOE also informed the Committee that – in the future – it will post final evaluation reports on the IFAD corporate website as they become available, and will include the ACPs once they are signed by IFAD Management and the concerned government.