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Enabling poor rural people
to overcome poverty

Draft minutes of the seventy-first session of the Evaluation Committee

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Evaluation Committee — Seventy-second Session
Rome, 17 July 2012

For: Approval

Draft minutes of the seventy-first session of the Evaluation Committee

1. These minutes cover the deliberations of the Evaluation Committee during its seventy-first session, held on 2 April 2012. Six agenda items were discussed: (i) draft minutes of the seventieth session of the Evaluation Committee; (ii) country programme evaluation for Ghana; (iii) country programme evaluation for Viet Nam; (iv) approach paper for the corporate-level evaluation of the IFAD Policy on Supervision and Implementation Support; (v) IFAD Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, together with IOE comments thereon; and (vi) other business.
2. All Committee members attended the session with the exception of Canada¹. The Committee welcomed the representative of Luxembourg, who replaced France as a member after the seventieth session. Observers were present from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, China, Finland and Mauritius. The Committee was joined by IFAD's Associate Vice-President, Programmes, Programme Management Department (PMD); the Director of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE); the Director of the West and Central Africa Division (WCA); the Director of the Policy and Technical Advisory Division (PTA); and other IFAD staff.
3. The Committee decided to shift the order of items for discussion to facilitate the presence of key members of IFAD Management. It also decided to include under "other business" an update by PMD on the Evaluation Committee annual country visit to take place in Ghana in June 2012.

A. Minutes of the sixty-ninth session of the Evaluation Committee

4. The Committee discussed the draft minutes of the seventieth session of the Evaluation Committee (EC 2012/71/W.P.2), presented for approval by members. The minutes were adopted without further changes.

B. Country programme evaluation for Ghana

5. The Committee discussed the country programme evaluation of Ghana (EC 2012/71/W.P.3), submitted for review by members.
6. The Committee expressed appreciation for the high-quality evaluation; it also acknowledged the good collaboration between IOE and PMD in undertaking this important exercise.
7. The Committee noted that, compared with the results of past evaluations, the performance of the IFAD-supported portfolio in Ghana had improved according to most evaluation criteria. On the other hand, project efficiency was still in need of improvement due, among other factors, to challenges encountered in project design, slow project start-up and implementation and the lack of an IFAD country presence until 2010.
8. The Committee raised some questions concerning country-level partnering by IFAD with other United Nations agencies within the framework of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), other multilateral entities such as the African Development Bank, the donor community at large and the private sector, especially for, but not limited to, the purposes of scaling up and infrastructure development. Management noted that, with the recent outpostting of the CPM, such partnership initiatives were mainly taking place at the level of the donor working group, of which IFAD is an active member, and that opportunities for collaboration are identified within this framework.

¹ The representative of Canada had advised in advance of the meeting that their participation would not be possible due to a clash in dates with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations North American regional conference (hosted by Canada).

9. The Committee also addressed the issue of how Ghana's performance compares with that of other African countries, including members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Management noted that overall, Ghana is performing better in specific areas, given the country's solid agriculture policy and the emphasis given to agriculture and rural development. In addition, IFAD's country presence has enhanced IFAD's capacity to identify and address issues rapidly. Moreover, linking direct supervision with design activities allows feedback to be provided in a timely fashion and helps reduce start-up delays.
10. In responding to questions by the Committee on innovative approaches adopted by the Fund in Ghana, particularly with regard to value chains, Management noted that the current value chain approach being implemented by IFAD in the country is innovative and still at the pilot stage, and that the approaches being adopted would benefit from close review.
11. Regarding the assessment of economic efficiency, IOE and PMD held different views on the methodology to be used and proxy indicators to be adopted. Participants recognized the need to discuss the matter further in the interests of clarification.

C. Country programme evaluation for Viet Nam

12. The Committee discussed the country programme evaluation of Viet Nam (EC 2012/71/W.P.4), submitted for review by members.
13. The Committee expressed its appreciation for the good evaluation and the consultative and participatory approach taken; it also recognized the timeliness of this evaluation, whose conclusions and recommendations had informed the preparation of the country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP) discussed at the April 2012 session of the Board.
14. The Committee requested clarification on the level of partnerships in the context of national policy dialogue. Management noted that IFAD's engagement with partners depends on specific circumstances; it also recognized the need for closer relationships with multilateral development banks to pursue its scaling-up agenda. Management added that in the future opportunities for collaboration would be explored within the UNDAF context.
15. The Committee noted the importance of anchoring COSOPs to past experience so as to better identify the strategic direction the Fund should pursue in its in-country activities.
16. On the issue of the length of CPE reports, the Committee noted the potential trade-off between shortening the reports at the expense of the coverage of issues to be addressed in the document.
17. Regarding the assessment of economic efficiency, the Committee agreed on the proposal for IOE and PMD to consult on this issue and prepare a document to be submitted for the Committee's consideration and guidance in the course of the year.
18. In response to comments by Committee members, IOE stated that it would endeavour to explain the rating methodology more explicitly in future evaluation reports.

D. Approach paper for the corporate-level evaluation of the IFAD Policy on Supervision and Implementation Support

19. The Committee discussed the approach paper of the corporate-level evaluation of the IFAD Policy on Supervision and Implementation Support, submitted for review by members.
20. Committee members expressed their appreciation for the well-prepared document and agreed with the paper's objectives, methodology and key questions.

21. The Committee noted that the approach paper covered all important areas to be addressed by the evaluation, but suggested that the evaluation also give due attention to answering the “why” question and to learning from the experiences of less successful operations.

E. IFAD Policy on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment

22. The Committee discussed the IFAD Policy on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (EC 2012/71/W.P.6), submitted for review by members.
23. The Committee noted that the policy had benefited from several inputs, including the findings of the corporate-level evaluation on approaches and results in promoting gender equity and women’s empowerment in IFAD operations, as well as the comments provided by Executive Board members at the informal Executive Board seminar on gender held in September 2011. The Committee commended IFAD Management for the participatory approach adopted in finalizing the policy for submission for approval, together with IOE comments, at the 105th session of the Board in April 2012.
24. The Committee noted that the gender policy should promote the needs of women according to the specific development context. It also acknowledged that the policy is aligned with the overarching goal of the IFAD Strategic Framework 2011-2015.
25. The Committee reiterated the importance of the correlation between enhanced gender equality and reduced malnutrition. In addition, it stressed the importance of ensuring women’s access to extension services and land. The Committee also proposed the introduction of additional indicators to measure gender equality, such as assets owned by women-led households, including land.
26. The Committee agreed with the IOE observation that an indication of the administrative budget required for timely implementation of the policy would have been useful. Management noted the difficulty in assessing such costs.
27. The Committee was also informed by IOE of the development of a synthesis report on gender, a task led by IOE in the context of the Evaluation Cooperation Group (ECG) of the multilateral development banks. The first draft of the report was presented in Luxembourg on 29 March 2012 and the final report would be launched at the ECG meeting in autumn 2012.

F. Other business

28. The Committee considered the preliminary proposal and tentative programme for the country visit to Ghana prepared jointly by PMD, the Office of the Secretary and IOE.
29. The Committee welcomed the preparations made to date and provided a number of suggestions to be considered in finalizing the country visit proposal. The Committee recognized that discussions regarding the participation of Executive Board representatives not members of the Evaluation Committee in country visits were ongoing; it also agreed to hold a further briefing for Committee members before the Ghana country visit.
30. The Chairperson expressed appreciation to all members of the Committee for their work, given that the term of the current Committee expired with the seventy-first session. In particular, he thanked the representatives of Burkina Faso and Ireland for their contributions, as their term on the Executive Board had also now been completed. The Committee expressed sincere appreciation to the Chairperson for his incisive leadership and facilitation role over the past year.