

Document: EC 2013/78/W.P.3
Agenda: 3
Date: 22 August 2013
Distribution: Public
Original: English

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Enabling poor rural people
to overcome poverty

Minutes of the seventy-seventh session of the Evaluation Committee

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Evaluation Committee — Seventy-eighth Session
Rome, 5 September 2013

For: Approval

Minutes of the seventy-seventh session of the Evaluation Committee

1. These minutes covers the deliberations of the Evaluation Committee during its seventy-seventh session held on 26 June 2013.
2. The Chairperson welcomed the new representative of India and also the representative of Japan, who took the place of Luxembourg.
3. All Committee members attended the session (Brazil, Egypt, Finland, Germany, India, Indonesia, Japan, Nigeria and Norway). Observers were present from Canada, China, France, Mexico, Switzerland and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela; Australia attended the session as a silent observer in accordance with the new procedure adopted by the Executive Board at its 108th session. The Committee was joined by the IFAD Associate Vice-President, Programme Management Department; the Acting Director, Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE); the Officer-in-Charge, Office of the Secretary of IFAD; and other IFAD staff.
4. Nine agenda items were discussed: (i) minutes of the seventy-sixth session of the Evaluation Committee; (ii) corporate-level evaluation of IFAD's institutional efficiency and efficiency of IFAD-funded operations: recommendations on IFAD governing bodies; (iii) preview of the results-based work programme and budget for 2014 and indicative plan for 2015-2016 of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD; (iv) corporate-level evaluation on direct supervision and implementation support; (v) country programme evaluation for Mali; (vi) follow-up study to assess the implementation of recommendations from the Joint Evaluation of the Agriculture and Rural Development Policies and Operations in Africa of the African Development Bank and IFAD; (vii) President's Report on the Implementation Status of Evaluation Recommendations and Management Actions (PRISMA) and IOE comments thereon; (viii) Chairperson's report on the country visit to Viet Nam; and (ix) other business.

Adoption of the agenda

5. The Committee discussed the agenda for its seventy-seventh session. The Committee agreed to the Chairperson's proposal that, since the issue discussed in closed sessions during the seventy-fifth and seventy-sixth sessions had been taken up by the Executive Board but was, as yet, unresolved, consideration and **approval of the minutes of those closed sessions would be deferred to a future session of the Committee.**
6. The Committee also agreed to the inclusion of additional information items on the agenda, under other business, as follows: briefing on (i) the 2013 extraordinary Annual General Meeting of the United Nations Evaluation Group, to be hosted by IOE at IFAD headquarters on 26 and 27 September 2013; (ii) the conference organized by IOE in conjunction with the tenth anniversary of IFAD's independent evaluation function; (iii) the process related to the revision of the Evaluation Manual; and (iv) the seventy-eighth session of the Evaluation Committee, to be held on 5 September 2013. **With these revisions, the agenda for the session was adopted.**

Minutes of the Evaluation Committee

7. Given the short time available for consideration of document EC 2013/77/W.P.3, containing the minutes of the seventy-sixth session of the Evaluation Committee, **the Committee decided that these minutes would be considered at the forthcoming seventy-eighth session, to be held on 5 September 2013.**

Corporate-level evaluation of IFAD's institutional efficiency and efficiency of IFAD-funded operations: Recommendations on IFAD governing bodies

8. As agreed at its seventy-sixth session, the Evaluation Committee considered document EC 2013/76/W.P.4/Rev.1, the corporate-level evaluation of IFAD's institutional efficiency and efficiency of IFAD-funded operations, with a particular focus on the recommendations relative to IFAD's governing bodies.
9. There was an engaging discussion on a number of the recommendations, including:
 - **Governing Council sessions.** Diverse views were expressed regarding the frequency of sessions, i.e. whether they should be held annually or biennially. Some members proposed that, at least in years in which a Consultation on the Replenishment of IFAD's Resources was being held, the Governing Council could be foregone. Management reiterated its view that annual Governing Council sessions were important as they provided a unique opportunity for all Member States to interact with Management and with each other, and an occasion to advocate for smallholders and ensure their place on the international agenda. There was broad support for the need to conduct a study on the role, objectives and value-added of Governing Council sessions. This study would analyse the advantages and disadvantages – also in terms of cost-effectiveness – of retaining the current scheduling pattern and of altering the frequency of the session, and consider how to render the Council more strategic. It was recalled that **this issue was scheduled for consideration by Convenors and Friends.**
 - **Effectiveness of Executive Board sessions.** Recognizing IFAD's hybrid nature as an organization combining characteristics of both a United Nations agency and an international financial institution, the Committee expressed a common desire to explore ways to render Board sessions more effective and strategic. One member commented on the potential value of conducting a survey among IFAD staff to ascertain their views on the role of the Executive Board; another suggested the possibility of convening a working group to consider possible areas for efficiency gains. A suggestion was also made by one member that an extra session be added to the Board's annual calendar to ensure that issues were considered in sufficient depth. Members underlined the importance of receiving Board documents in a timely manner, so as to facilitate thorough review by capitals. Furthermore, an Executive Board retreat with the President, Management and IOE would provide an opportunity for deeper self-reflection on the role and performance of the Board. Questions were raised with regard to the advisability of the President serving also as Chairperson of the Board. On a logistical point, a number of members expressed support for the recommendation that two representatives for each country on the Executive Board be allowed access to Board sessions. Moreover, the Chairpersons of the Audit and Evaluation Committees should have permanent seats in the Board room in addition to those already held by their countries' Board representatives. One member called for Board representatives to be granted access to sessions of the Governing Council.
 - **Delegation of authority to the President for the approval of project and programme proposals.** There was broad agreement that approval of project and programme proposals should remain within the purview of the Executive Board, as this fostered greater involvement in IFAD's core operations and interaction with country offices and staff. However, consideration could be given to increasing the financing ceiling for proposals submitted for Board approval under the lapse-of-time procedure and by correspondence. IOE provided clarification that the spirit of the recommendation was that the Executive Board would nonetheless retain the right to request that a particular proposal be considered during a formal

Board session. In addition, it was suggested that due consideration be given to the option of having the Board approve country strategic opportunities programmes (COSOPs), inclusive of resource frameworks.

- **Code of conduct for Executive Board representatives.** A number of members expressed their support for this initiative and the Committee noted that **this issue would be considered by Convenors and Friends at its forthcoming meeting on 30 July. With respect to the proposal to establish terms of reference for Executive Board representatives, IOE clarified that broad guidelines rather than detailed terms of reference were envisaged. One member suggested that targeted introductory orientation sessions could be organized for Board members.**
 - **Convenors and Friends.** In answer to some queries regarding reporting procedures for Convenor and Friends meetings, the Committee was advised that notes of the meetings of Convenors and Friends with the President were drawn up and distributed to meeting participants. Such notes could be distributed within the Lists by the respective Convenors; this would also have the benefit of allowing all members to provide input to the agendas of these meetings.
 - **Disclosure of Audit Committee documents.** Committee members were advised that while these documents were not subject to disclosure under the IFAD Policy on the Disclosure of Documents, the Board could decide to expand the policy in the interests of increased transparency. However, given the nature of some documents presented to the Audit Committee, a certain restriction on disclosure might need to be retained.
 - **Clarity of Committee reports to the Board.** The Secretariat took note of suggestions for improved clarity, particularly with respect to recommendations for the Board.
10. **In conclusion, the Committee agreed that a range of fundamental issues had been raised by the corporate-level evaluation with respect to IFAD's governing bodies. A mechanism needed to be identified to ensure that these issues were appropriately followed up with a view to bringing recommendations to the Board for a decision on the way forward. In this respect, the Secretariat expressed its willingness to summarize the recommendations relative to IFAD's governing bodies so as to facilitate discussion thereon with Convenors and Friends, the Evaluation Committee and the Executive Board, as appropriate. This document could be considered together with the revised action plan to be presented to the Evaluation Committee at its seventy-eighth session, for further consideration at the Executive Board in September.**
- Preview of the results-based work programme and budget for 2014 and indicative plan for 2015-2016 of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD**
11. The Committee considered document EC 2013/77/W.P.4, the preview of the results-based work programme and budget for 2014 and indicative plan for 2015-2016 of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD.
12. Members expressed deep appreciation for the document, which took into account their requests for greater consistency with IFAD's administrative budget document and for a work programme and budget "based on a critical assessment of needs" and aimed at providing "better linkage between the work programme and expenditures." The document provided greater detail in the breakdown of budgeted costs and showed actual expenditures for the previous year, as well as the 2013 budget utilization.

13. With respect to **increased efficiency**, members expressed their support for the base-case budget scenario and welcomed the envisioned cost-cutting measures, including the increased use of national/regional consultants. Members encouraged the identification of further efficiencies, highlighting travel as possible area . IOE expressed its agreement on the issue and indicated that this was a consideration informing the revision of the Evaluation Manual, and other measures being promoted. It was requested that future budgets present a single scenario. On another subject, the Committee expressed its support for the planned impact evaluation in 2014.
14. While support was voiced for the **proposed synthesis study on middle-income countries** and its presentation to the Consultation on the Tenth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources (IFAD10), members recalled IFAD's mandated focus on the poorest of the poor, noting that an increased focus on the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) would be important and welcome. IOE expressed agreement with the focus on the core mandate and indicated that IOE's planned evaluation in 2014 on fragile states was in line with this mandate. In response to a question from the Committee, clarification was provided on the role of geographical distribution in proposing the subregional evaluation of English-speaking Caribbean countries. IOE also indicated that the inclusion of the Evaluation Synthesis on Pastoral Development was included in the high-case budget scenario as a result of Committee requests.
15. In answer to queries on the potential use of the **3 per cent carry-forward** to bridge the difference between the two budget case scenarios, IOE clarified that the purpose of the carry-forward was to pay for unforeseen activities rather than planned activities which should be included in the budget. It was noted that future budget submissions should present a single scenario, with strong underlying arguments.
16. One member advocated for further **shortening of** the document before its presentation to the Executive Board, and requested IOE to reconsider the addition of the new **strategic objective** focused on capacity-building, as this went beyond the mandate of IOE.
17. Clarification was also provided on some activities planned for 2014 and also on changes to **IOE staffing** foreseen for 2014. With respect to the latter, the Committee was advised that discussions were under way with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation regarding secondment of a Senior Evaluator at the P-5 level in 2014, and that this would be included in the budget presented to the Executive Board when agreement had been reached.
18. **The Committee expressed its broad agreement with the preview of IOE's proposed objectives, divisional management results, work programme and budget for 2014, as presented in the zero growth base-case scenario. IOE confirmed that members' comments would inform the final draft presented to the Executive Board at its 109th session in September 2013. The updated final work programme and budget for 2014 and indicative plan for 2015-2016 would be presented to the Evaluation Committee at its seventy-ninth session, after which it would be considered by the Audit Committee in November 2013 and the Executive Board in December 2013, and then submitted for the approval of the Governing Council in 2014.**
Chairperson's report on the country visit to Viet Nam
19. The Committee considered document EC 2013/77/W.P.9, which contained the draft Chairperson's report on the 2013 annual country visit (Viet Nam) of the Evaluation Committee.
20. Members who had taken part in the country visit expressed their appreciation for the opportunity it had provided to enhance their technical understanding and build

relationships among Committee members. The importance of such visits as a means to better understand IFAD's work in the field, the contribution of independent evaluation activities, and the key issues facing the Evaluation Committee was underscored.

21. Some members expressed the view that country visits should highlight the reality of the country, **showcasing not only the success stories but also the challenges** and constraints relative to IFAD-supported projects. **A recommendation to this effect would be included in the final report to be presented to the Executive Board in September.**
22. There was no consensus on the proposed **recommendation that the Executive Board reconsider the decision taken at its 107th session regarding country visits**: some members were in favour of pursuing this recommendation, while others preferred not to reopen the issue but rather await implementation of the new procedures approved by the Executive Board. It was observed that future country visits should, however, remain linked to independent evaluation activities.
23. **It was agreed that the report would be revised to include an executive summary and to reflect the comments of the Evaluation Committee. The final report would be presented for the review of the Executive Board in September; the Chairperson would also prepare a PowerPoint presentation to complement the report.**

Follow-up study to assess the implementation of recommendations from the Joint Evaluation of the Agriculture and Rural Development Policies and Operations in Africa of the African Development Bank and IFAD

24. The Committee next considered document EC 2013/77/W.P.7, the assessment of the implementation of recommendations from the Joint Evaluation of the Agriculture and Rural Development Policies and Operations in Africa of the African Development Bank and IFAD. The final joint evaluation report, together with Management's response and related plan of action, was reviewed by the Executive Board at its ninety-eighth session in December 2009. Members and Management alike felt that such follow-up studies by IOE were useful for selected corporate-level evaluations.
25. IOE stated that there had been some advances in terms of joint collaboration between IFAD and the African Development Bank (AfDB), especially at the country level, while progress was mixed in the areas of the action plan, policy gap, effectiveness and strategic partnership at the international level. Results in terms of the partnership dimension were uneven, raising questions about the perceived value added of the partnership, the commitment of Management and the Board, and the incentives for staff to support and deepen the partnership.
26. Management welcomed IOE's assessment of the implementation of the collaboration agreement. Management pointed out that collaboration had progressed slowly, resulting in the joint financing of only two projects since 2010. However there was increasing scope for collaboration in light of the AfDB initiative on drought resilience for the Sahel and the Horn of Africa. In addition, the outlook for collaboration in West Africa might improve with the return of the AfDB to Abidjan after its temporary relocation to Tunisia.
27. Recalling that collaboration with the AfDB was mission-critical for IFAD, some members pointed out **the natural scope for partnership** between IFAD and the AfDB, particularly in light of the concentration of LDCs in the region, while also highlighting the difficulty encountered in encouraging a focus on rural livelihoods. Given that there was some diversity in the focus of the two organizations, areas of high complementarity should be identified and synergies needed to extend beyond cofinancing opportunities. In terms of success indicators, one member suggested that mobilization of parallel financing should also be considered. Management also

indicated that AfDB trust funds could potentially finance collaborative project and programme preparation activities. However, it was recognized that working together could be time-consuming and subject to some constraints.

28. Members' views diverged regarding the potential effectiveness of motivating **staff** to engage in greater intra-agency collaboration. Some members raised the issue of **increased delegation of authority** to staff in the field. Management indicated that this had been undertaken to a sufficient extent and was unlikely to enhance collaboration: the scope for bottom-up collaboration was limited because, for such an effort to be successful, increased engagement was required by Senior Management.
29. **The Committee noted the follow-up study and encouraged Management to enhance its collaboration with the AfDB. The Committee welcomed IFAD's invitation to the AfDB to attend the Fund's replenishment consultations as an observer and recommended that successful examples of cooperation between AfDB and IFAD be included in discussions during the IFAD10 Consultation.**

Corporate-level evaluation on direct supervision and implementation support

30. The Committee considered document EC 2013/77/W.P.5, the corporate-level evaluation on supervision and implementation support, Management's written response and the IOE senior independent adviser's report on the quality of the evaluation.
31. The Committee joined Management in commending IOE for the high quality of the report and welcomed Management's intention to take on board the recommendations arising from the evaluation. Members expressed their satisfaction with the unusually rapid implementation of this policy, which had been made possible by intensive training initiatives and the commitment of Senior Management. Members welcomed the transfer of responsibility for loan administration and oversight of financial matters to the Controller's and Financial Services Division, the increased institutional dialogue, and the enhanced implementation support through country offices.
32. A number of issues were highlighted by Committee members:
 - **Scaling up.** It was noted that scaling up was fundamental to IFAD and while scalability would be squarely included in the supervision guidelines, it was also a central part of project design training provided, as scalability needed to be addressed at the design phase to ensure that opportunities were easier to identify during supervision and implementation support (SIS) activities.
 - **Strategic use of grant resources.** Management clarified that it would await the outcome of the corporate-level evaluation being carried out on the IFAD Policy for Grant Financing before fully addressing the recommendation on the strategic use of grant resources to enhance project readiness and SIS activities. In the meantime, however, a grant proposal to fund capacity-building and technical assistance activities to be undertaken by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) would soon be presented to the Board for approval through the lapse-of-time procedure. It was also Management's intention to present a multi-donor trust fund proposal to the Executive Board to provide resources for project design and SIS activities in fragile states. With respect to the grant proposal to FAO, one member recalled that FAO was currently assessing the capacity of its field missions and the findings would be key in deciding on the use of FAO's capacity in the field.
 - **Supervision guidelines.** It was agreed that the recommendations contained in the evaluation should be reflected in the supervision guidelines to ensure

wide dissemination. Management advised that finalization of the revised supervision guidelines was foreseen for completion by end-March 2014.

- **Policy dialogue and partnership with other IFIs.** Members indicated that effectiveness in this area was often proportional to portfolio size, and that IFAD should therefore be realistic in its expectations. Greater involvement in policy dialogue by Senior Management would be crucial in addressing this issue. Member States could also help in broadening the perception of IFAD as a valued partner in the field.
 - **Relationship between IFAD and governments.** The Committee reiterated the need for joint ownership of SIS activities by IFAD and partner governments and reiterated that capacity-building activities could enhance government involvement and engagement.
 - **Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems.** Given that weak M&E systems were a recurring finding in evaluation reports, IFAD provided clarification as to efforts being made to strengthen this aspect. While all development agencies were struggling with this issue, progress had been made by IFAD in raising its level of compliance: 90 per cent of projects were now producing annual output monitoring reports and close to 100 per cent were producing project completion reports. Progress was also being made on the preparation of 30 impact evaluations, as per the commitment made under the IFAD9 Consultation. The Committee noted the observation by the senior independent adviser that incentives should be identified and every effort made to internalize the benefits as well as the costs of M&E at the project level. This would promote greater ownership by the project teams and by governments. Members endorsed the proposal for further discussion of IFAD's effort to improve monitoring and evaluation at a future session of the Evaluation Committee.
33. **The Committee reiterated its appreciation for the corporate-level evaluation and information contained therein – including Management's response and the report of the senior independent adviser. The document would be presented for the review of the Executive Board in September 2013.**
- Country programme evaluation for Mali**
34. The Committee considered document EC 2013/77/W.P.6, the country programme evaluation for Mali.
35. Members thanked IOE for the quality of the evaluation. Specific attention was paid to the **distribution of projects and funds between the north and south** of the country. While understanding the concerns expressed in the evaluation, members reiterated that IFAD's work in the north was essential, also in terms of helping rebuild the region during a difficult time. In this regard, it was noted that increasing activities in southern Mali should not come at the cost of investment in northern areas.
36. Regarding the recommendation to lower the concentration of activities in northern Mali, the country programme manager (CPM) pointed out that the current situation was a response to both government priorities and the lack of other development partners working in the north of the country. In addition, IFAD's operations and visibility benefitted greatly from working in areas where other development partners were not present or active. IOE responded that IFAD should reflect on the geographic priorities in light of the conflict situation, as IFAD was not equipped to operate in active conflict areas. An increased focus on thematic areas across regions, rather than a geographical focus, could reduce risk by enabling IFAD to shift resources from one part of the country to another in the event of a conflict arising or intensifying.

37. A Committee member requested further information on the finding regarding the handling of **gender** in the portfolio. The CPM responded that IFAD was increasing the focus on young women in its operations.
38. An observer requested further information on the impact of activities addressing **child malnutrition**. The CPM explained that this data could be obtained through the Results and Impact Measurement System (RIMS). In addition, the support of the Belgian Fund for Food Security allowed for the collection of very strong evidence in terms of metrics. IOE concurred that these activities were proving effective, also as a result of the provision of community training.
39. IOE pointed out that an interim strategy was in effect, but that there were no plans for a new **COSOP** in the immediate future. The CPM agreed that a new COSOP was vital, and confirmed that this would be undertaken once the country situation was more stable.
40. The Ambassador of Mali highlighted the strong collaboration between IFAD and the Government, and the importance of this relationship in coping with the current instability and promoting the long-term economic growth and political stability of the country, especially in the north.
41. **The Committee noted the country programme evaluation for Mali with appreciation.**

President's Report on the Implementation Status of Evaluation Recommendations and Management Actions (PRISMA) and IOE comments thereon

42. The Committee turned to the tenth edition of PRISMA (document EC 2013/77/W.P.8 + addendum 1), including IOE's written comments thereon.
43. The Committee complimented Management on the preparation and presentation of the report and welcomed the constructive comments provided by IOE. The Committee saw PRISMA as a central tool in improving the learning loop between evaluation and operations over time.
44. In answer to queries about cooperation with FAO on the issue of **policy dialogue and capacity-building**, Management agreed that while relations and cooperation between the two organizations were strong at the global level, there was scope for further collaboration at the country level, particularly with regard to policy dialogue and capacity-building.
45. The progress made with respect to the ex post **tracking of allocations to gender-related activities** was welcomed, as was Management's commitment to further efforts in this regard.
46. Clarification was also provided relative to **recommendations not agreed to by Management and** hence not implemented. Management agreed that the next edition of PRISMA would provide an historical overview of such recommendations for the Committee's information.
47. **The Committee noted PRISMA and IOE's response thereto, both of which would be reviewed by the Executive Board in September 2013.**

Other business

48. Under other business, several items were presented for information to the Committee:
 - (a) The Acting Director, IOE briefed Committee members on two events scheduled for the second half of 2013: (i) the 2013 extraordinary **Annual General Meeting of the United Nations Evaluation Group**, to be hosted by IOE at IFAD headquarters on 26-27 September 2013; (ii) the **conference celebrating the tenth anniversary of IFAD's independent evaluation function**; and (iii) the **revision of the Evaluation Manual**.

- (b) One member requested further information regarding the **financial resources dedicated to the planned anniversary seminar**, and the **target audience envisioned**. IOE clarified that, while costs were not expected to be high, it was currently reaching out to donors to mobilize extra budgetary resources. The target group was expected to include IFAD Member States, Management and staff, relevant private-sector actors and country partners. Several members pointed out that a unique strategic opportunity could be created by linking the seminar to the Governing Council session.
- (c) The Chairperson informed the Committee that the **seventy-eighth session of the Evaluation Committee would** be held on 5 September 2013.