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Investing in rural people

Impact evaluation of the Jharkhand- Chhattisgarh Tribal Development Programme in India – Management Response

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For: Review

Impact evaluation of the Jharkhand-Chhattisgarh Tribal Development Programme in India – Management Response

Overall comments

1. Management acknowledges the relevant and comprehensive work undertaken by the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) for the impact evaluation of the Jharkhand-Chhattisgarh Tribal Development Programme (JCTDP) and appreciates the systematic analysis and focused recommendations contained in the report. Management finds it reassuring that the evaluation's overall conclusions are in line with the JCTDP's project completion report, which has served as a fundamental operational learning tool.
2. Management recognizes the complexity of undertaking ex post impact evaluations of long-term, multi-activity projects such as the JCTDP, given that they require intensive and costly data collection strategies that are time-consuming to organize. These challenges are magnified when the selected project, as in this case, does not incorporate the evaluability criteria for this type of evaluation at design. In spite of these challenges, Management would like to underscore the timeliness of the report, given the importance of learning from this type of evaluation and given the strengthened focus on impact assessments for the Tenth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources (IFAD10).
3. Management notes that the report provides a fair assessment of the project, which achieved tangible results in spite of marked weaknesses. Management welcomes the positive assessment of the quality of IFAD's supervision and implementation support and the midterm review, which helped implement the JCTDP in a very difficult context, including in remote districts affected by the insurgency. Management therefore agrees with the report's finding that the JCTDP had a positive impact on the target group, yielded gains in terms of community mobilization and empowerment and microfinance development, and made useful contributions to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. Management is pleased with the positive assessment of other issues closer to IFAD's area of influence, such as the close alignment of project goals with relevant government and IFAD policies and strategies, and the promotion of both technical and institutional innovations.
4. Management appreciates the useful set of lessons presented in the evaluation and looks forward to implementing the recommendations.

Recommendations

5. Design for context. Management agrees that all project designs should include a thorough poverty and institutional analysis, but always within the limitations of available resources and making use of existing assessments whenever possible. Management also agrees that projects covering two states under one loan should no longer be financed, unless there is a clear strategy for their integration. In this regard, Management notes that since the agreement reached during the country programme evaluation in 2011, IFAD has stopped financing two-state projects in India.
6. Convergence with government programmes. Management agrees with the recommendation that all projects clarify how they are aligned with key national and state-level programmes in the agriculture and rural sectors. In fact, all new projects since 2011 have included detailed convergence plans with national programmes such as the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM), while ongoing projects have had convergence plans retrofitted. Management believes that some best practices of convergence are emerging, for example the Madhya Pradesh

Women's Finance and Development Corporation and the Maharashtra Women's Development Corporation – the lead agencies for the IFAD-financed Tejaswini Rural Women's Empowerment Programme – have entered into memorandums of understanding with NRLM.

7. Sustainability strategy. Management agrees that all IFAD-financed projects should be designed in such a way as to ensure sustainability of benefits. In fact, considerable progress on sustainability is being made in the India country programme through, for example, formation of grass-roots institutions such as the village development committees in the Orissa Tribal Empowerment and Livelihoods Programme or the fish marketing societies in the Post-Tsumani Sustainable Livelihoods Programme (PTSLP). These grass-roots institutions are increasingly being federated into apex bodies, such as the Fishermen's Federations in PTSLP and the community-managed resource centres in Maharashtra under the Tejaswini programme, many of which are gradually moving towards financial self-sufficiency. They are also being registered as societies to ensure complete autonomy.
8. Monitoring and evaluation. Management welcomes IOE's recommendations to strengthen IFAD's self-evaluation tools, from the logical framework through to supervision and completion reporting. Management notes that given that this has been an area of systematic learning for IFAD over several years, partly based on IOE's lessons and findings, Management is elaborating a plan to strengthen the self-evaluation system. Such plan, as suggested in this evaluation, will emphasize the use of flexible evaluative approaches (logical framework as a key monitoring tool through the project cycle), managing for results, and better learning from implementation. In doing so, Management will, inter alia, seek to learn from the India programme which is at the forefront of outcome monitoring, with annual outcome surveys now routinely undertaken across the portfolio, monitoring and evaluation experts included in supervision missions, project completion reports peer reviewed, and logical frameworks increasingly used as tools for project monitoring.

Methodology

9. Management sees impact evaluations as one additional important tool to measure IFAD's development effectiveness. Clearly, the choice of measurement tool needs to be tailored to the type of project and context that IFAD is supporting, knowledge gaps, and available resources. Management strongly believes that better understanding impact evaluation as a tool will help realize its potential as a learning mechanism. The two points below are raised in that spirit.
10. First, Management is of the view that moving forward, given the complexities of this type of evaluation, more effort will need to be made to ensure that methodological trade-offs are well described in approach papers. Management is convinced that some different methodological choices would have further enhanced the quality of this evaluation, inter alia, for example, a more systematic use of recall methods to reconstruct baselines whenever they were of inadequate quality.
11. Second, Management believes that in subsequent impact evaluations more attention should be paid to following standard international protocols fully, such as describing the techniques used to assess the propensity score matching, and discussing the main assumptions of the estimation method.