



Governing Council

Twenty-First Session
Rome, 11-12 February 1998

Agenda Item 12

IFAD POLICY ON THE DISCLOSURE OF DOCUMENTS

1. At its Sixty-First and Sixty-Second Sessions, held in September and December 1997, the Executive Board considered two documents on the IFAD Policy on the Disclosure of Documents (EB 97/61/R.11 and EB 97/62/R.38) (Attachments I and II respectively).
2. At its Sixty-First Session, in September 1997, the Executive Board accepted the policy as presented in document EB 97/61/R.11, recommending to the Governing Council that it adopt a retroactive disclosure policy. In making this recommendation, the Executive Board voiced concerns about the cost implications and requested that management look into options for minimizing costs, including a step-wise approach.
3. At its Sixty-Second Session, in December 1997, the Executive Board reviewed document EB 97/62/R.38 and, on the basis of the information provided therein and in line with its recommendation to the Governing Council for a zero-growth budget, then decided to recommend a prospective application of the policy through an eighteen-month interim phase. The Governing Council is therefore invited to:
 - (a) consider an IFAD Policy on the Disclosure of Documents on the understanding that full implementation be deferred until such time as an interim phase is carried out;
 - (b) approve an eighteen-month interim phase (from July 1998 to December 1999) during which governing body documents will be made available on IFAD's Web site in all four languages. Only the main report and not the appendixes of the President's Reports would be made available, as the latter are not completely available in electronic form; and
 - (c) request the Executive Board to review the disclosure policy and procedures at its Sixty-Ninth Session in April 2000 (subsequent to the end of the interim phase) with a view towards adopting a more comprehensive disclosure policy.



EB 97/61/R.11
11 August 1997

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Executive Board

Sixty-First Session

Rome, 10 - 11 September 1997

Agenda Item 7

IFAD POLICY ON THE DISCLOSURE OF DOCUMENTS

1. To date, IFAD publications and a limited number of Executive Board documents, released pursuant to Rule 13 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board, have been made available to the public. In accordance with the goal expressed in IFAD's Vision of becoming a "knowledge organization", and with the trend at other international financial institutions, IFAD has formulated the attached Policy on the Disclosure of Documents.
2. The Executive Board is invited to consider the Policy and, recognizing its effect on all Member States, to submit the same to the next Session of the Governing Council for its consideration and approval. The Executive Board is invited to give special attention to the date on which the Policy will take effect, in the light of the discussion set forth in section III.

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Bracketed language represents options.

Each section has *NOTES* that provide background information on the Policy. The *NOTES* will be included in the paper presented to the governing bodies, but will be deleted prior to publication of the Policy.

IFAD POLICY ON THE DISCLOSURE OF DOCUMENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

In 1996, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) undertook the task of formulating a Policy on the Disclosure of Documents for presentation to and approval by its governing bodies. The intent was twofold:

- (a) first, to endow IFAD with the means of increasing its accountability, transparency and service to its stakeholder community while furthering general knowledge about its role in promoting sustainable development;
- (b) second, and intimately related to the first, to put in place the legal framework to establish IFAD as a knowledge organization, as stated in IFAD's Vision issued on 17 May 1995.

This [notice, booklet, pamphlet, etc.] presents: the Policy; a description of the documents available to the public; the means by which such documents may be obtained and the associated costs; and the documents that are not available under this Policy.

II. THE POLICY

As an international organization, IFAD has an obligation to make information available to its donors and stakeholders, to apprise them of the use and productivity of the funds with which it is entrusted. IFAD believes that the trust and public support of its constituencies is in direct relation to the efficiency, transparency and responsibility with which it executes this obligation. In developing an IFAD Policy on the Disclosure of Documents, the presumption has been in favour of broad access to information.

The basic objectives of the Policy are to:

- (a) account for the use of public funds to IFAD's stakeholder community, including, but not limited to: IFAD Member States, development partners (public international and bilateral, private and non-governmental), and taxpayers at large;
- (b) increase public awareness, knowledge and interest in the activities of development organizations;
- (c) improve the quality, efficiency and potential for replication of development programmes and projects through enhanced coordination and sharing of "lessons learned" among donors;
- (d) encourage beneficiary participation and project ownership through increased knowledge of development activities in neighboring or similar regions;
- (e) promote public debate on the benefits of sustainable development activities;
- (f) strengthen a global, democratic and sustainable development process through increased accountability and transparency.

NOTES

In drafting this section, the following factors were considered:

- *Policies of Other International Financial Institutions (IFIs). Existing policies of other IFIs, including the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (AsDB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), were reviewed to ensure harmony between IFAD's Policy and those policies. As in other IFIs, IFAD's primary concern is to adopt a Policy tailored to its goal of affording the broadest public access to information while protecting the legitimate interests of Member States and other stakeholders and preserving the integrity of the deliberative process.*
- *Facilitating Access to Information. IFAD's goal of becoming a knowledge organization cannot succeed without facilitating and increasing access to the information it holds.*

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This implies broadly categorizing its inventory of material as "for" or "not for" disclosure, and putting in place appropriate mechanisms to retrieve information and answer requests. A subsidiary consideration, which should be addressed during the setting up of the system, is to ensure that, where necessary, the most recently updated information will be provided.

- *Diversifying Donor Income. As development aid becomes increasingly subject to reductions in bilateral and multilateral funding, diversifying IFAD's donor base (for instance through private-sector support), and thereby solidifying its organizational sustainability, requires a system that will ensure transparency and accountability to the donor community.*
- *Beneficiary Ownership. With better access to information, development partners and beneficiaries will be able to draw on examples of other projects in order to reinforce ownership and sustainability.*
- *Lessons Learned and Replication of Sustainable Project Components. Sharing information, what worked and what failed, will raise the quality of development assistance as a whole. In facilitating access to its information banks, IFAD will support the global effort to achieve sustainable development. In addition, the potential will be greater for cross-fertilization and replication of successful projects or components.*

(Policy resumes on next page)

III. EFFECTIVENESS

This Policy is effective as of _____, subsequent to its approval by IFAD's governing bodies. The Policy covers the documents listed in section IV below and applies to all documents issued by IFAD [since its founding] [from the effectiveness date forward].

NOTES

As is evident from the bracketed language, two basic options exist in the formulation of this section:

- *Apply the Policy retroactively; or*
- *Apply the Policy to documents produced as of the date of the approval of the Policy.*

Discussion

The choice has broad implications in terms of IFAD's goal of becoming a knowledge organization. The issue also has important implementation and budgetary ramifications.

The first option would make the Policy retroactive to enable disclosure of documents produced prior to the issuance of the Policy. While this does not mirror the practice of other organizations, the Policy would have the advantage of immediately making a substantial amount of IFAD's fund of information available for disclosure.

In the second scenario, the Policy would be limited to documents produced by the Fund as of the date of approval of the Policy. This procedure is similar to that of other IFIs.

The points in support of and against retroactivity, brought forward by the Disclosure Policy Working Group during the internal policy development process, are detailed below:

A. Retroactive Policy

- *In IFAD's Vision, IFAD stated its goal of becoming a knowledge organization. The key element in achieving this goal is providing access to the knowledge that lies within its walls. Without such access it is almost meaningless to talk about becoming a knowledge organization in either the short or the long run.*
- *As a knowledge organization dedicated to the alleviation of rural poverty, IFAD has a moral responsibility to place its work at the service of all who may benefit from it.*
- *Policies should not be dictated by the resources (technological, financial or otherwise) necessary to implement them.*

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- *It is not possible to achieve the objectives of the Disclosure Policy (page 2) without a substantial amount of retroactivity. No retroactivity at all would be self-defeating. Given the possible sensitivity of certain information to Member States and/or the organization, it is suggested that retroactivity be limited to the years 1978-1989. Documents produced during the period 1990-1996 would not be available under the Policy until the year 2000.*
- *On the issue of Member State sensitivity regarding the release of documents currently marked "confidential": the classification is rather theoretical. The reality is that IFAD documents are available to those people who have privileged access to staff; in adopting a retroactive policy IFAD would be granting fair access.*
- *On the issue of cost: technological developments (photocopying machines, electronic files, etc.) have facilitated the ability to disseminate information rapidly and at low cost. It is estimated that 90% of all requests for information would come through the World Wide Web (the Web) and that all files produced after the date of the approval of the Policy and 10% of the documents produced prior to that date would be available in the Portable Document Format (PDF). The remaining requests would most likely come from Third World nations without access to the Internet. However the expense to service those requests would be completely justified, as they are precisely the nations that stand to benefit most directly from the information available under the Policy.*

B. Non-Retroactive Policy

- *The implications of a retroactive policy would be considerable in terms of possible political sensitivity, quality control and financing.*
- *In terms of political implications, all documents presently classified as "confidential", "for official use only", or "restricted" were originally drafted and cleared with the intention that these were not for public disclosure. Member Governments often provided sensitive and confidential information, which they might not have put forth if they had known the document would be disclosed. There are approximately 15 000 documents of this nature in the Documents Centre. In addition, there are about 5 000 governing body documents that are also considered under the present rules to have "restricted" or "limited" distribution and are not available to the public. With a retroactive policy, IFAD could risk political embarrassment with Member Governments.*
- *There has been an uneven and variable quality control of IFAD documents over its 20-year history. In the past only project documents submitted to the Executive Board were edited. Now all governing body documents undergo an editing process and documents control. For other documents, this is not always the case. The Re-Engineering Working Group on Documents Management and Publications recognized the need for greater editorial quality control throughout IFAD and recommended three full-time editor positions, which have been approved but not yet filled. The first such editor should be in place this year.*

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- *The financial implications for a retroactive policy are considerable. Of the documents listed in section IV, 90% are in paper format only, and only 50% of the governing body documentation is in PDF. Paper, photocopying and mailing costs will increase, and additional staff will be needed to respond to and fill requests. On the basis of statistics on the volume of requests presently handled in house and the number of requests handled by the World Bank Public Information Centre (PIC), it is estimated that IFAD would need three additional person-years to implement a fully retroactive disclosure policy.*
- *The World Bank's disclosure policy is not retroactive: documents written before the disclosure policy came into effect have a 30-year moratorium before being releasable to the public.*

C. Impact of Technology on Current and Future Documents

- *In the past few years it has become extremely inexpensive to provide information via the Internet. High-quality PDF files can be made available for electronic distribution for almost nothing. As an international organization, IFAD must take advantage of this technology to effectively distribute its work and communicate with others.*
- *The Disclosure Policy must be seen as something that will be beneficial to IFAD and the public at large. The Policy is a unique tool in the ongoing process of learning how to improve the lives of the rural poor. To this end, every effort should be made to place as many current (i.e., not historical) and future documents as possible on the Web in PDF. Where this is not feasible, the documents would only be available at IFAD Headquarters. The Policy would include a statement that IFAD will do its best to make information available but, in some cases, due to cost constraints, the document would only be available for consultation in Rome.*

D. Summary and Conclusions

The principal issues that must be considered in choosing either in favour of or against retroactivity of the Policy are: the goal of becoming a knowledge organization, as weighed against the potential political sensitivity of some materials that would be disclosed, and the additional costs and administrative work requirements.

IFAD management wishes to make it clear that, if the Executive Board recommends a retroactive Policy, documents listed in section IV would be made available as such. It is materially impossible to go through a process of cleaning up, correcting or changing the content of documents.

Taking into consideration the foregoing discussion, IFAD management invites the Executive Board to make its recommendation on the issue of effectiveness to the Governing Council.

Management recommends that the first year of implementation of the Policy be a trial period during which statistics would be kept, permitting IFAD to evaluate the frequency, nature and volume of requests received, and providing the basis for a more accurate assessment of additional resource requirements.

(Policy resumes on next page)

IV. CATEGORIES OF DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE UNDER THE DISCLOSURE POLICY

The following documents are available to the public upon request:

A. Project Documents

- Formulation Reports. Elaborated by IFAD and the borrower, Formulation Reports provide the detailed technical framework for project development. The Formulation Report constitutes the basis on which senior management approves the decision to proceed to appraisal.
- Project Appraisal Reports. Each project financed in whole or in part by IFAD is based on a detailed Appraisal Report. In addition to basic project information (components, objectives, beneficiaries, etc.), the document provides an economic, social and political overview of the country, and detailed studies on the anticipated impacts of the project at the beneficiary level. During negotiations, the borrower will be given the opportunity to identify sensitive or confidential text or data contained in the Appraisal Report. The delegations will discuss the sections so identified and agree either to strike or reformulate them. Once the project is approved by the Executive Board, the Appraisal Report shall become available under the Policy.
- Report and Recommendation of the President. Each project submitted to the Executive Board for approval is presented by the President in this summary form. The report contains a summary of the loan or grant data as well as supplementary assurances delivered by the borrower at negotiations. In exceptional cases, where extensive portions of a document are deemed sensitive, the document as a whole may be marked restricted by the director of the IFAD division concerned.
- Country Strategic Opportunities Papers (COSOPs). These studies provide a concise, analytical basis for all IFAD-initiated operations in a designated country. The COSOP is generated through a participatory process, in consultation with the country, and contains an overview of the following sectors: economy, agriculture, institutional framework and rural poverty. As such, it identifies a strategy for IFAD interventions. The paper is reviewed and approved by senior management and constitutes the framework for the development of a pipeline of activities.

B. Legal Documents

- IFAD Agreements with Member States. The Agreements, signed between the borrower states and IFAD, are international treaties registered with the Secretariat of the United Nations, in accordance with Article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations and the General Assembly's Resolutions 97 (I) of 14 December 1946; 364 (b) (IV) of 1 December 1949; and 482 (V) of 12 December 1950.
- Agreements between IFAD and International Organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Other Institutions. These cooperation and framework agreements provide information on the coordination efforts that exist between IFAD and other development organizations.

C. Evaluations, Studies, Policy Papers and Reports

- Evaluation Reports and Studies. These documents furnish substantive data and analysis on project implementation and beneficiary impact, including various types of project evaluations, country portfolio evaluations, thematic studies and lessons learned. In exceptional cases, where extensive portions are deemed sensitive, the document as a whole may be marked restricted by the director of the IFAD division concerned. Lessons learned are the outcome of the evaluation experience. They are one-page, self-sufficient documents on a defined subject and theme.
- Policy Papers. IFAD's position on a variety of issues is defined and addressed in these papers, which are presented to the governing bodies and/or management for approval. Once approved by the appropriate body, the papers are available for public release.
- Reports on Workshops and Seminars. Data and information (proceedings, summary reports, pamphlets, etc.) regarding workshops, seminars or other conferences that are wholly or partially funded or sponsored by IFAD are regularly collected and available for release.

D. Governing Body Documents

- Executive Board and Governing Council Documents. Documents dealing with various issues are submitted to the meetings of IFAD's governing bodies for review and discussion. Subject to the objection of a Member of these bodies, the documents submitted will be available after the sessions.

E. Financial Documents

- Business Opportunities. Pursuant to the Agreement Establishing IFAD, the Fund is not directly involved in the implementation or administration of its projects. The procurement of goods and services under loans and grants provided by IFAD is handled directly by the project executing agency of the borrower/recipient or the cooperating institution appointed by IFAD. On a semi-annual basis, IFAD publishes a "Business Opportunities" report, containing brief information on project-related procurement activities.
- Consolidated Reports on Supplementary Funds. Published on a yearly basis, this report reviews the use of funds granted to IFAD outside of the regular replenishment process. The funds are usually targeted for specific types of activities by the donor.

F. Environmental Documents

- Environmental Screening and Scoping Notes (ESSNs). Under IFAD's administrative procedures for environmental assessments, all IFAD-initiated projects entering the pipeline are subject to environmental screening and scoping, which is captured in the form of an ESSN. The ESSN provides an analysis of the main natural-resource-management trends in the project area, and provides a judgement as to the probability

and significance of environmental impacts associated with the project. The ESSN provides a classification (A, B, C) that reflects the degree of environmental concern, with Category A projects requiring full environmental assessment before appraisal.

- Environmental Assessments (EAs). All IFAD projects classified as Category A in the ESSN are subject to an Environmental Assessment. The EA provides an analysis of the environmental issues, details the design measures required to mitigate or avoid negative environmental impacts and promote positive ones, and specifies environmental monitoring requirements.
- Initial Environmental Examinations (IEEs). IEEs are undertaken where there is insufficient information to judge the probability and significance of potential project-induced environmental impacts. IEEs provide an initial examination of the environmental issues and indicate the need for mitigation measures within project design.

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The list of documents available is in line with those of other IFIs. Both World Bank and AsDB policies cover a broad range of operational, sectoral and evaluation reports. The trend in these institutions is to release as much technical information as possible and restrict confidentiality to that which is genuinely sensitive. To that end, many documents are released, some only after review and approval by the organization's executive body, and others without such review and approval.

- *Formulation and Appraisal Reports. Both the World Bank and AsDB release the equivalent of Appraisal Reports. In time, if possible, standardized format and language for IFAD reports should be adopted. This would ensure that all Appraisal Reports conform to certain standards. While producing documents for public disclosure entails rigorous quality control, management believes that quality is a by-product of disclosure rather than a prerequisite.*
- *Report and Recommendation of the President. The AsDB releases these documents following their approval by the Board of Directors. As always, in exceptional cases the document may be partially or fully restricted upon request of the division concerned where it is deemed that the report contains sensitive information. As with Appraisal Reports, the borrower is asked to identify sensitive information during loan negotiations. Information so identified is circulated separately to the Board and is not provided to the general public.*
- *Country Strategic Opportunities Papers. The World Bank and AsDB differ on the release of such documents. The World Bank restricts distribution of documents that define the Bank's strategy in a particular country. The AsDB, on the other hand, declassifies and releases its Country Operation Strategy Study papers to interested parties following their review or consideration by the Board of Directors, unless the Board decides to withhold any portion of the document for reasons of confidentiality or sensitivity.*

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- Evaluations, Studies and Policy Papers. Neither the World Bank nor AsDB release project Evaluation Reports as such. The World Bank publishes an "Annual Review of Evaluation Results" prepared by its Operations Evaluation Department. The proposal that IFAD release its Evaluation Reports would thus distinguish it from these institutions. The idea of establishing IFAD as a knowledge organization argues strongly in favour of releasing its Evaluation Reports and studies and, obviously, its lessons learned.
- Governing Body Documents. While the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board and Governing Council do not specifically state that documents presented to either body are restricted or confidential, management recommends that the decision to disclose documents should be the prerogative of such body. Thus the Members of the particular body will be given the opportunity to object to disclosure at the time of the meeting. Absent any objection, the document will be deemed disclosable. On this issue, the World Food Programme (WFP) has released a statement indicating that all its Executive Board documents will be available on the Internet.
- Financial Documents. In addition to the usual data released to the public through annual reports containing audited financial statements, the World Bank includes its semi-annual unaudited statement in its semi-annual "Bank Information Statement". The World Bank also publishes detailed statements of all loans and credits on a monthly basis. The AsDB releases most of its financial information through annual reports, as well as in the information brochure "Financial Profile".
- Environmental Documents. Both the World Bank and AsDB provide the same types of documents to the public. The AsDB holds off release of the documents until they have been released locally by the borrowers and officially transmitted to the Bank. The World Bank conditions release of Environmental Action Plans on receipt of the borrower's consent. Other environmental documents (Environmental Data Sheets, Environmental Assessments and Environmental Analyses) are released once they are finalized.

(Policy resumes on next page)

V. OTHER DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE

These documents, which constitute the core documents of the organization and have always been available upon request, are set forth for information purposes.

- IFAD Basic Documents. The Agreement Establishing the International Fund for Agricultural Development, Lending Policies and Criteria, Monitoring and Evaluation: Guiding Principles, Procurement Guidelines, Guidelines on Relending Rates, General Conditions Applicable to Loan and Guarantee Agreements, By-Laws for the Conduct of the Business of IFAD, Financial Regulations of IFAD, Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board and the Rules of Procedure of the Governing Council constitute IFAD's basic texts.
- IFAD Annual Reports. This annual publication provides a general overview of the organization and summarizes IFAD's activities and operations for the year.
- IFAD Publications and Information Materials. Public awareness documents are distributed to IFAD's mailing list and are also available upon request. These documents include: flyers, pamphlets, fact sheets, press releases, information kits, brochures, booklets, guides to issues or themes, studies, and books; and information materials such as videos, audio tapes, slides and photographs. A fee may be charged for information materials.
- Belgian Survival Fund Joint Programme (BSF.JP) Annual Reports. Established to assure the survival of persons threatened by hunger, malnutrition and underdevelopment in regions of the Third World registering the highest mortality rates due to these causes, the BSF.JP brings together several international organizations collaborating to improve household food security and nutrition, among other factors. As the Lead Agency, IFAD is entrusted with guiding and facilitating the implementation of the various activities and projects funded by the BSF.JP.

VI. HOW TO OBTAIN DOCUMENTS

Requests may be forwarded by mail, fax or e-mail to the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

Postal Address: Via del Serafico, 107 - 00142 Rome, Italy

Telephone: (39)(6) 54591

Fax: (39)(6) 504-3463

E-mail: _____@ifad.org

NOTES

It is not proposed to charge a fee at this time. The issue will be addressed at the end of the trial period when IFAD has a better idea of the volume of requests. If the decision to charge a fee is made, the Executive Board will be so informed and appropriate measures will be taken to account for the funds received.

A dedicated e-mail box should be created to receive all e-mailed requests for IFAD documents or publications.

VII. DOCUMENTS NOT AVAILABLE UNDER THE DISCLOSURE POLICY

All policies have inherent constraints due to the need to protect the legitimate interests and legal rights of certain individuals and groups. Thus, while IFAD recognizes the need for the greatest degree of transparency and openness in the execution of its mandate, the following documents are not available for public release.

- Personnel records of any type.
- Verbatim deliberations of the Executive Board and Governing Council. In order to protect the integrity of the deliberative process and encourage openness in exchanges, the written submissions, summaries thereof, voting records for Executive Board decisions and any other deliberations of these bodies or their committees are not available for release, unless specifically authorized by the body concerned.
- Information provided to IFAD on a confidential or restricted basis by any party. Such information may not be released without the consent of such party.
- Internal audit reports.
- IFAD investment strategy.
- IFAD resource mobilization strategy.
- Correspondence, office memoranda, and other internal working documents.
- Disbursement status of loans and grants, and recovery status of loan charges, including suspension or lifting of suspension.

NOTES

Each policy reviewed has restrictions on the disclosure of certain documents. All policies consistently deny access to personnel records, medical records and other confidential staff documents. Other organizations also consistently protect the integrity of the deliberative process by restricting release of the deliberations of their governing bodies and committees, and of financial documents dealing with investment strategies.

DRAFT RESOLUTION ON THE
IFAD POLICY ON THE DISCLOSURE OF DOCUMENTS

Resolution --/XXI

IFAD Policy on the Disclosure of Documents

The Governing Council of IFAD,

Recognizing the principles stated in IFAD's Vision dated 17 May 1995, and in particular the goal of becoming a knowledge organization;

Affirming the desirability of increasing IFAD's accountability, transparency and service to the public at large;

Having considered document GC 21/L._ on the IFAD Policy on the Disclosure of Documents;

Decides that the IFAD Policy on the Disclosure of Documents shall be adopted as set forth in document GC 21/L._ and shall have effect from



Executive Board
Sixty-Second Session
Rome, 3-4 December 1997
Agenda Item 11

IFAD POLICY ON THE DISCLOSURE OF DOCUMENTS - INTERIM PHASE

1. At its Sixty-First Session held in September 1997, the Executive Board approved the document "IFAD Policy on the Disclosure of Documents" (EB 97/61/R.11). After consideration of the issues, the Executive Board was in favour of recommending to the Governing Council that IFAD adopt a retroactive disclosure policy. However, it had a number of questions about the cost implications involved and requested that management look into the various options for minimizing costs that might involve a step-wise approach.
2. Since that time, management has carried out a detailed cost analysis of the financial implications of a retroactive and/or prospective disclosure policy and discussed the issues involved in further detail with members of IFAD's senior staff. Based on preliminary estimates, a retroactive policy would have very high cost implications.
3. The estimated costs of a prospective disclosure policy are lower than a retroactive one but they too will have a cost, including the staff-related costs of handling requests, printing and dispatch as well as paper and mailing costs.
4. Therefore, in line with the Board's mandate for a zero-growth budget, management recommends that the Executive Board reconsider its decision on the application of the disclosure policy for the time being.
5. In the interim, management would recommend that, over an eighteen-month period (mid-1998 to end-1999), IFAD make governing body (Executive Board and Governing Council) documents available to the public through the Internet at a Web site, thereby avoiding costs of paper, printing and mailing. In addition, governing body documents already undergo an editing and document-control process and are translated into the four official languages. There is practically a zero cost to this measure as any incremental cost could be absorbed within the present working capacity.
6. The Internet is a potentially valuable tool for the dissemination of information and is used in the implementation of disclosure policies by other international financial institutions to great effect (over 95% of requests to the World Bank for documents are via the Internet). IFAD presently has a limited presence on the Web, which is expected to be increased over the next six months.

7. It is to be noted that IFAD will continue its efforts to increase public awareness and the dissemination of its knowledge through other means, such as publications and information material on lessons learned.

8. In light of the above, the Executive Board is invited to recommend to the Governing Council that:

- (a) it consider an IFAD Policy on the Disclosure of Documents on the understanding that full implementation be deferred until such time as an interim phase is carried out;
- (b) it approve an eighteen-month interim phase (from July 1998 to December 1999) during which governing body documents will be made available on IFAD's Web site in all four languages. Only the main report and not the appendixes of the President's Reports would be made available, as the latter are not completely available in electronic form; and
- (c) a review of both the policy and its procedures be carried out at the end of the interim phase with a view towards a more comprehensive disclosure policy.