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Investing in rural people

President's report on a proposed grant under the global/regional grants window to the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation for Capitalizing on Experiences for Greater Impact in Rural Development

Note to Executive Board representatives

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For: Approval

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CTA	Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
IICA	Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture

## Recommendation for approval

The Executive Board is invited to approve the recommendation for a proposed grant under the global/regional grants window to the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation for the project Capitalizing on experiences for greater impact in rural development, as contained in paragraph 5.

## President's report on a proposed grant under the global/regional grants window to the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation for Capitalizing on Experiences for Greater Impact in Rural Development

### Part I – Introduction

1. The present report recommends the provision of an IFAD grant in the amount of US\$1.5 million under the global/regional grants window to the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) for the project Capitalizing on Experiences for Greater Impact in Rural Development. The grant proposal document is contained in the annex to this report.
2. The goal of IFAD grants is to significantly broaden and add value to the support provided to smallholder farming and rural transformation, thereby contributing to rural poverty eradication, sustainable agricultural development, global food security and nutrition. In order to achieve these goals, IFAD grants should adhere to three basic principles: (i) make a significant contribution to a global, regional or national public good related to IFAD's mandate; (ii) focus on interventions where grant financing has clear added value and a comparative advantage over regular loans; and (iii) not be used as a substitute for resources from IFAD's administrative budget.
3. The objectives of IFAD grant financing are to: (i) promote innovative, pro-poor approaches and technologies with the potential to be scaled up for greater impact; (ii) strengthen partners' institutional and policy capacities; (iii) enhance advocacy and policy engagement; and (iv) generate and share knowledge for development impact. Poor rural people and their organizations should be squarely positioned at the centre of each grant submission to fulfil IFAD's mandate to enable poor rural people to improve their food security and nutrition, raise their incomes and strengthen their resilience.
4. The proposed project is in line with the goal and objectives of IFAD grant financing, as stated in the IFAD grant policy. It will contribute to strategic priority area 5 – better accountability for results and closing data gaps – and help build capacity among organizations representing and working with the rural poor to analyse, document, learn from and share their experiences to influence others, thereby contributing to greater development impact. It will also result in the testing and adaptation of a learning module on experience capitalization as a global public good. Furthermore, the project will allow IFAD to add value to existing collaboration among international partners on this topic by leveraging the involvement of partners and their networks in agriculture and rural development on the ground. Through the network links already developed by the project partners, there will be considerable cross-regional and intercountry knowledge exchange on topics aligned with IFAD's strategic priorities.

## Part II – Recommendation

5. I recommend that the Executive Board approve the proposed grant in terms of the following resolution:

RESOLVED: that the Fund, in order to finance, in part, the project for Capitalizing on Experiences for Greater Impact in Rural Development, shall provide a grant not exceeding one million five hundred thousand United States dollars (US\$1,500,000) to the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation for a three-year project upon such terms and conditions as shall be substantially in accordance with the terms and conditions presented herein.

Kanayo F. Nwanze  
President

# Capitalizing on Experiences for Greater Impact in Rural Development

## I. Background

1. Maximizing the impact of development interventions by building on existing knowledge is critical to achieve rural transformation and food security in general as well as the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals. Knowledge is being generated all the time, in many places and at many levels, not least as a result of development initiatives, when a group of farmers tries out a new approach or when an organization implements a project. Unfortunately, often such knowledge is not shared beyond the immediate implementing stakeholders, and may not even be shared within an organization. While documenting good practices has been promoted in many development projects, this is often cursory and focused on attaining visibility rather than on understanding why an initiative was successful or not. As a result, the lessons learned are not adequately shared or, consequently, utilized.

## II. Rationale and relevance to IFAD

2. The process known as “experience capitalization” can help organizations improve the effectiveness of rural development interventions and contribute to innovative solutions through in-depth analysis of what has been done and learned in the field. The experience-capitalization methodology identifies, analyses and shares “real life” experiences, and uses them to bring about innovation and change.
3. It helps development practitioners and stakeholders learn from experience, and contributes to strengthening practice-based knowledge. Such approaches have long been used in IFAD’s country programmes in Latin America, Asia and the Pacific, and West and Central Africa. A publication documenting lessons produced during a small grant programme on how to use experience capitalization in East and Southern Africa was among the top 10 most popular downloads from the global development platform ELDIS in 2014.
4. The approach complements more rigorous quantitative and qualitative research and assessment methods by revealing the stories behind the numbers. It produces a narrative going beyond a simple “success story” and serves as a cost-effective and inclusive way to document lessons. With this grant, every effort will be made to ensure rigour in the analysis and documentation of lessons.
5. The value addition of this grant project will be to scale up the approach to the global level. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is currently finalizing an online learning module on the approach, working with global and regional partners, including CTA, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and IFAD. The module aims to provide the tools and skills to plan and implement an experience-capitalization process. This grant project will allow for the field testing of the English-language version of the module, and its adaptation into French and Spanish.

## III. The proposed project

6. The overall goal of the project is to improve the quality of rural development initiatives and ensure better results in the fight against poverty. The project’s main objective is the sustainable adoption of experience capitalization as an approach for continuous learning, improvement and scaling up in rural development initiatives.
7. While the ultimate project beneficiaries will be farmers and rural communities, the immediate target groups of the project activities will be professionals in development projects (including IFAD-supported projects), government and non-

governmental organizations, research institutes, farmers' organizations and other organizations interested in rural development. The project will work with individuals and organizations that enable outreach to and engagement with broader networks, such as federations and apex organizations. This will broaden reach, extend benefits, help disseminate results and ensure maximum impact from the grant resources.

8. The project will cover a three-year period and comprise four components: (i) project management; (ii) preparation for experience capitalization; (iii) implementation of experience capitalization; and (iv) adoption and institutionalization.
9. Through training workshops, follow-up coaching, a community of practice and distance-learning materials, the project will build the skills of development practitioners to analyse, document, use and share lessons to improve performance, and to influence others. It will build on earlier initiatives supporting knowledge-sharing and networking among development projects, as well as on an international effort to develop a learning module on experience capitalization, following the successful Information Management Resource Kit (IMARK) model.<sup>1</sup> It will be a cost-effective way for IFAD and partners to support and interpret better quality analysis, documentation and sharing of lessons learned in rural development projects globally.
10. Priority themes, geographic scope and implementation partners will be identified in consultation with IFAD. An inception workshop will gather representatives of IFAD country programmes and regional and national partner organizations at IFAD headquarters in early 2016.
11. The project will follow a learning-by-doing approach, applying the experience-capitalization approach so as to continuously learn from and improve project implementation. Ongoing reflection on activities and emerging experiences is expected to produce a collection of lessons on the experience-capitalization approach focusing on the stages of the process, the tools and support needed, and how it can be adopted and institutionalized.
12. A strategy for sustainability will underpin project activities from the outset. By proactively encouraging participating organizations to adopt experience capitalization as part of their working methods, this grant will be well positioned to ensure long-term impact. As part of the process, participants will prepare action plans for putting in place the conditions required to institutionalize the approach. A strong community of practice will play a pivotal role throughout the project, supporting all activities, including collecting lessons, peer learning and sharing among participants, and contribute strongly to sustainability. It will allow for the expansion of the training process – involving other individuals and organizations willing to learn and exchange lessons learned – and provide a permanent space for knowledge-sharing.
13. Key activities will include: (i) the identification of priority themes, participants and experiences for capitalization; (ii) the preparation and adaptation of learning materials; (iii) the establishment of a web-based knowledge platform, including to support the community of practice; (iv) the training of trainers; (v) the collection and organization of information; (vi) training workshops for the broader target group, including the analysis of results; (vii) documentation, development and sharing of knowledge products; (viii) the use of lessons learned for improved performance and to support scaling up; and (ix) planning for adoption and institutionalization.

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<sup>1</sup> IMARK is an e-learning initiative in information sharing and knowledge management facilitated by FAO.

## IV. Expected outputs

14. The project's expected outcomes are: (i) the recognition of experience capitalization as an approach that leads to better results and impact; (ii) the adoption and institutionalization of the experience-capitalization approach by development organizations; and (iii) the use and influence of lessons in development design and results.
15. The main expected outputs are: (i) tools and resources for the effective implementation and sustainability of the approach, including the adapted learning module and a global community of practice; (ii) improved skills and capacity among development practitioners to analyse, document, use and share lessons; and (iii) documented lessons in priority thematic areas and from the analysis of project experience shared globally.
16. The application of the experience-capitalization approach to the implementation of the project itself will provide answers to a series of learning questions about the conditions required to implement and institutionalize the approach effectively. This is expected to involve analysis and the identification of lessons that can, respectively, be used to validate the approach and demonstrate how it can improve development interventions.

## V. Implementation arrangements

17. The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), established jointly by the European Union and the 79 Member States of the Secretariat of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, will implement the project. The project will complement CTA activities under way as part of its knowledge management portfolio. During implementation, CTA will work closely with two other international organizations, FAO and IICA, and identify other regional-level implementation partners. CTA will follow its own regulations with regard to contracting the services of implementing partners. Any management fees associated with these contracts will be covered by the CTA overhead (see table 2, expenditure category 7).
18. CTA will contract a project officer, reporting to the CTA senior programme coordinator of knowledge management and responsible for the day-to-day management of project activities, management and facilitation of the community of practice, project implementation process analysis, documentation and sharing of lessons, and supporting project monitoring and evaluation. CTA, FAO and IICA will also provide time of senior staff to guide implementation and support the analysis and use of lessons to improve the approach and the learning module.
19. CTA will have formal responsibility for monitoring the project and clearly presenting its progress and achievements. CTA will prepare annual work plans and budgets and submit semi-annual reports. All monitoring and evaluation activities will be cascaded down to the level of the implementing partners, whereby facilitators, trainers and their organizations will be required to generate regular reports as part of their contractual obligations. IFAD participation will be coordinated by the Strategy and Knowledge Department, which will be responsible for project supervision.
20. CTA will maintain separate records and financial accounts, prepared in accordance with internationally recognized standards, in respect of the grant. CTA will submit semi-annual unaudited statements of expenditures (SOEs) to IFAD and ensure that the entire project implementation period is covered by audit, through the submission of separate audit opinion letters regarding the SOEs submitted to IFAD, duly completed by independent auditors. SOEs and audit reports alike will be project-wide and consolidate expenditures incurred by the recipient and any implementing partners.

21. However, CTA will be solely and ultimately responsible for the management of grant funds and financial reporting to IFAD. In addition, CTA will have its institutional accounts audited annually by independent auditors in accordance with International Standards on Auditing and deliver a copy of its audited financial statements to IFAD, including a reference to the IFAD grant, within six months following the end of each fiscal year.

## VI. Indicative project costs and financing

22. The total budget of the proposed grant project is US\$1.658 million, comprising IFAD financing in the amount of US\$1.500 million and cofinancing in the amount of US\$158,000. Additionally, CTA and its implementing partners will contribute in kind, predominantly through staff time, to the value of US\$551,000. This will bring the total value of the project to US\$2.209 million.

Table 1  
**Costs by component and financier**  
(United States dollars)

<i>Components</i>	<i>IFAD</i>	<i>Cofinancier (CTA, FAO &amp; IICA)*</i>	<i>Total</i>
1. Project management	414 000	105 000	519 000
2. Preparation for experience capitalization	86 000	454 000	540 000
3. Implementation of experience capitalization	704 000	72 000	776 000
4. Adoption and institutionalization	296 000	78 000	374 000
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 500 000</b>	<b>709 000</b>	<b>2 209 000</b>

\* CTA, FAO and IICA will also contribute in kind to the project to the amount of US\$551,000, which includes staff time, costs of publishing lessons and investment to date in the learning module.

Table 2  
**Costs by expenditure category and financier**  
(United States dollars)

<i>Expenditure category</i>	<i>IFAD</i>	<i>Cofinancier (CTA, FAO &amp; IICA)*</i>	<i>Total</i>
1. Salaries	240 000	291 000	331 000
2. Consultancies	164 400	48 000	212 400
3. Operating costs	149 600	370 000	519 600
4. Workshops	306 000	0	306 000
5. Trainings	120 000	0	120 000
6. Travel and allowances	400 000	0	400 000
7. Overhead/management fees	120 000	0	120 000
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 500 000</b>	<b>709 000</b>	<b>2 209 000</b>

\* Includes in-kind contributions to the value of US\$551,000.



## Results-based logical framework

	Objectives-hierarchy	Objectively verifiable indicators	Means of verification	Assumptions
Goal	Improve the quality of rural development initiatives, ensuring better results in the fight against poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organizations and development initiatives report positive changes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project evaluations</li> <li>Published stories and reports</li> <li>Interviews / surveys</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time is available to show improvements</li> <li>Access to information</li> </ul>
Objective	The sustainable adoption of experience capitalization as an approach for continuous learning, improvement and scaling up in rural development initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># organizations in the south using the experience capitalization approach</li> <li>Evidence-based knowledge of what works and why is used to scale up successes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project evaluation reports</li> <li>Organization strategies and plans</li> <li>Surveys</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Colleagues / managers support the approach</li> </ul>
Outputs	Outcomes: 1. Experience capitalization is recognized as an approach that leads to better results and impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Users share experiences, discuss and exchange information</li> <li>Increased demand for information about the approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stories (capitalization results)</li> <li>Surveys</li> <li>Project analysis results</li> <li>Feedback on CoP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Results are shared</li> <li>No context-specific difficulties</li> </ul>
	2. Development organizations adopt and institutionalize the experience capitalization approach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>50% of organizations develop action plans for adoption and institutionalization</li> <li>Experience capitalization is included in AWPBs and KM strategies with assigned budgets</li> <li>50% of organizations put plans into action and use lessons.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AWPBs</li> <li>KM strategies/plans</li> <li>Action plans</li> <li>Published stories include all adoption and institutionalization steps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organizations fulfil the conditions needed (resources, support)</li> </ul>
	3. Lessons are used and influence development project design and results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documented lessons are widely shared</li> <li>New design and planning processes draw on lessons learnt</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reports on training follow-up</li> <li>Publications</li> <li>CoP and website</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants have access to the Internet</li> </ul>
	Outputs: 1. Tools and resources for effective implementation and sustainability of the approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learning modules published in English, Spanish and French</li> <li>At least 200 practitioners per year download the learning materials</li> <li>Interactive website populated with lessons and examples</li> <li>100 active CoP members per region</li> <li>At least one active discussion and learning event organized on CoP per quarter, per region</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>User feedback</li> <li>Trainee surveys</li> <li>CoP/web platform analytics</li> <li>Final publications of every capitalization process</li> <li>Outreach of publications</li> </ul>	

	2. Improved skills and capacity of development practitioners to analyse, document, use and share lessons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 80 Experts / champions / trainers have the skills to train others</li> <li>▪ 24 practitioners per region are able to start a process</li> <li>▪ Organizations encourage and support others to start a new experience capitalization process</li> <li>▪ At least 240 participants join capacity building sessions</li> </ul>		
	3. Documented lessons in priority thematic areas and from analysis of project experience shared globally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Eight thematic publications disseminated, with total of 48 stories</li> <li>▪ Final publication on process analysis shared and discussed on CoP</li> <li>▪ Two journal articles published</li> </ul>		
Key Activities	Component 1: Coordination; Process analysis; Sharing; M&E and reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Project KM and communications strategies and M&amp;E system in place</li> <li>▪ A minimum of 400 practitioners join the community of practice</li> <li>▪ Regular reports reach IFAD and participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Workshop reports</li> <li>▪ Project report</li> <li>▪ Published stories</li> <li>▪ Interactive website</li> <li>▪ Final learning modules</li> <li>▪ Final publication on process analysis</li> </ul>	
	Component 2: Planning; Preparation and adaptation of learning materials; Construction of knowledge-sharing platform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Timely preparation of contracts, MOUs and working agreements with partners</li> <li>▪ Learning modules available in English, French and Spanish</li> <li>▪ Regional information exchange platform operational</li> </ul>		
	Component 3: Training of trainers; Capitalization of experiences; Documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 20 individuals trained as trainers in every region (a total of 80 participants)</li> <li>▪ Eight documentation processes support practitioners to write up and share their results.</li> <li>▪ A total of 48 cases, coming from at least 12 different countries, are described and analysed</li> </ul>		
	Component 4: Adoption of lessons learnt by participating organizations; Validation of a capitalization approach; Adoption and institutionalization of approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 8 workshops / meetings held to discuss the adoption of lessons and institutionalization are organized (2 per region)</li> <li>▪ At least 96 participants attend workshops on adoption of experience capitalization</li> <li>▪ 48 projects/ organizations produce adoption and institutionalization plans</li> </ul>		