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Investing in rural people

President's report on a proposed grant under the global/regional grants window to Columbia University/Global Association of Masters in Development Practice for the IFAD-Universities Win-Win Partnership: Engaging Students with IFAD-Supported Operations and IFAD Partners

Note to Executive Board representatives

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For: Approval

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Abbreviations and acronyms

MDP Masters in Development Practice

Recommendation for approval

The Executive Board is invited to approve the recommendation for a proposed grant under the global/regional grants window to Columbia University for the IFAD-Universities Win-Win Partnership: Engaging Students with IFAD-Supported Operations and IFAD Partners as contained in paragraph 5.

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Part I – Introduction

1. This report recommends the provision of an IFAD grant in the amount of USD 925,000 under the global/regional grants window to Columbia University, which hosts the Secretariat of the Global Association of Masters in Development Practice (MDPs), for the IFAD-Universities Win-Win Partnership: Engaging students with IFAD-supported operations and IFAD partners. 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, and 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. Rural poor people and their organizations should be squarely positioned at the centre of each grant submission to fulfill 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 programme is in line with the goal and objectives of IFAD grant financing, as stated in the IFAD grant policy, as:
 - It has a global public good dimension, with cross-regional/country knowledge exchange, given the focus on applied research, capacity building and partnerships
 - It aims at generating knowledge to be shared within IFAD, feeding into country programming activities, and policy engagement at regional and global level, that require a proper documentation and analysis of the achievements made;

- the grant recipient has been selected through a competitive call for proposals;
- it avails of interdivisional and interdepartmental collaboration;
- has a strong potential to leverage external co-financing; and
- its integration with IFAD's country programs. Indeed, MDP's students will prepare their thesis on the basis of requests originated from IFAD-supported projects. This demand-driven approach will ensure project ownership

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 IFAD-Universities Win-Win Partnership: Engaging Students with IFAD-Supported Operations and IFAD Partners, shall provide a grant not exceeding nine hundred twenty five thousands United States dollars (US\$925,000) to Columbia University for a three year period upon such terms and conditions as shall be substantially in accordance with the terms and conditions presented to the Executive Board herein.

Kanayo F. Nwanze
President

I. IFAD-Universities Win-Win Partnership: Engaging Students with IFAD-Supported Operations and IFAD Partners

II. Background

1. The proposal is submitted by the Global Association of Masters in Development Practice (MDPs)¹ coordinated by a MDP Secretariat hosted by the Earth Institute at Columbia University. The global MDP program is a two-year, graduate-level program designed to train aspiring practitioners to understand, design, and manage integrated approaches to sustainable development challenges across social sciences, natural sciences, health sciences and management.
2. Its rigorous cross-disciplinary, academic curriculum emphasizes the development of critical knowledge, skills, and attributes of an effective professional in developing societies. At the core of the MDP's curriculum is a field experience, called "Field Practicum" lasting normally about three months that emphasizes hands-on learning through participation in programs that contribute to solutions for real-world problems.
3. Through the Field Practicum MDP students are able to: strengthen their interest and motivation to remain engaged in rural development; apply knowledge gained in the classroom in a real-world setting; develop technical skills relating to development activities; and gain an understanding of sustainable development that comes with in-depth research.
4. It is proposed that thanks to this project, MDP students will be able to:
 - (a) use empirical data from IFAD-supported projects or IFAD partners in their studies, reports, and papers;
 - (b) gain hands-on experience in an IFAD-supported or IFAD partners development practice context;
 - (c) develop a network of in-country IFAD practitioners and partners useful for their professional future; and
 - (d) make a useful contribution to the community of IFAD-supported projects or IFAD partners

III. Rationale and relevance to IFAD

5. This proposal is built on the following win-win opportunities:
 - (i) Both IFAD and Universities have a commitment to build in-country capacity. Supporting students' research will strengthen their interest and motivation to remain engaged in rural development;
 - (ii) Students are keen to use empirical data for their research and dissertations, and to link their studies with the practice of development work;
 - (iii) IFAD-supported operations and IFAD partners² can benefit from additional analytical work, both during design and implementation, and in cross-cutting thematic areas;
 - (iv) By partnering with Universities, IFAD can also enhance its impact, visibility and quality as learning institution.
6. This proposal is also aligned with the IFAD policy for global and regional grants, as:

¹ The Global Association currently include 27 MDPs. A description of partners institutions can be found [here](#)

² Either i) a recipient of IFAD's financial support; ii) an implementing partner of an IFAD-supported project. Any eligible IFAD partner will have to submit a request to enter into the Program.

- It has a global public good dimension, with cross-regional/country knowledge exchange, given the focus on applied research, capacity building and partnerships;
 - It has a global coverage, since all IFAD regions will be covered;
 - It aims at generating knowledge to be shared within IFAD, feeding into country programming activities, and policy engagement at regional and global level, that require a proper documentation and analysis of the achievements made;
 - the grant recipient has been selected through a competitive process;
 - it avails of interdivisional and interdepartmental collaboration;
 - has a strong potential to leverage external co-financing; and
 - it provides value added to IFAD's portfolio. Indeed, MDP's students will prepare their studies on the basis of requests originated from IFAD-supported projects thereby securing project ownership.
7. In addition, the elements of innovation and capacity building justify grant financing. IFAD financing will benefit students from IFAD list B/C³ Member countries enrolled in MDPs located in list B/C countries. Such students have little opportunity to do applied field work nor have the budget to do so.

IV. The proposed programme

8. The programme will use an online platform to allow IFAD projects and partners to list their research proposals for which they request support. This list of proposals will be displayed to MDPs' students who will be able to browse among them and express their interest.
9. The target group is a minimum of 120 students from IFAD List B/C Member Countries. IFAD will support only students enrolled in the 14 MDPs located in the global South, prioritising financially disadvantaged students.
10. The programme will be implemented over three year period and will comprise three components: (i) support to students' field work, (ii) dissemination of findings and scaling-up; and (iii) program management.
11. Every year, IFAD-funded projects and IFAD partners would have the opportunity to post on-line (based on a USAID model: <https://www.rifellowships.org/>) a research proposal, indicating intended research objectives and timeframe. Interested students will be able to browse all proposals and express their interest with an on-line application.
12. The grant recipient will match research demands and students' interest. In addition to the priority given to financially disadvantaged students, further selection criteria would include: (i) the alignment of student's studies with the programme's request; (ii) student's academic records; (iii) completion of at least one year of academic coursework; and (iv) the student's commitment to continue to work on rural development upon completion of her/his studies.
13. Regardless of the type of research, each student will be responsible during their Field Practicum for a "Deliverable". Deliverables will be discussed and agreed prior to the student's arrival and in consultation with the student, her supervisor and the MDP Secretariat. Each student will make a presentation of the draft Deliverable

³ B/C lists can be found [here](#)

prior to leaving the country, to allow validation from the programme and relevant stakeholders. A final Deliverable will be prepared shortly after returning to their academic institution. Examples of Deliverables are:

- Analysis of Value Chain stakeholder capacities: through consultations with IFAD project's value chain stakeholders to better identify specifics of programme activities
 - Marketing studies, socio-economic assessment studies, land tenure studies: through research and data collection around programme specific needs. It is expected that the majority of research proposals will relate to these studies.
 - Analysis of programme Monitoring & Evaluation data: through analysis of existing programme data, (e.g. farm level productivity, household assets, etc.) to assist programme teams identifying bottlenecks, as well as estimate impacts.
 - Knowledge management products: students could produce informative KM products share IFAD programme result;
 - Policy analysis: students could review existing policies that frame, enable or constrain programme activities and prepare papers
14. Each graduate student would receive: logistic support from the programme; academic supervision from a University professor; and a lump-sum contribution of up to USD 5,000 to meet part of field costs.
 15. Every year the best studies would be selected following a two-step process: (i) a short-list on the basis of the final grading; and (ii) a final list, based on a scoring done by IFAD and the partner institution. The best studies would be published and made available on-line at the [MDP virtual library](#) and on the IFAD website. The authors of the top 10% studies would be invited to IFAD HQ- where they would be also offered career development coaching - and at the annual International Conference on Sustainable Development to make a presentation.
 16. This program can leverage additional financing resources from Trusts and Foundations to scale-up its activities, covering additional global South Universities and increased number of students. A number of potential partners have been already expressed an initial interest. To this end, the MDP Secretariat will work intensively during programme implementation to pursue further partnership development. A significant contribution of counterpart funds has been allocated to ensure effective fund raising activities.
 17. With regard to sustainability, it is expected that this programme will be able to demonstrate the value of partnering with Universities and the capacity of Master-level students to contribute to the work of IFAD through high quality studies in a very cost-effective manner. it is expected that IFAD-supported programmes and IFAD partners will provide direct funding from their budgets to continue this partnership and mainstream this initiative or that different modalities of further partnership development will be sought. The evaluation of the grant – which will determine the value of the programme – will use a participatory assessment including a survey to Project Managers of IFAD projects.

V. Expected outputs

18. The goals of this win-win partnership are: (i) to support the engagement in rural development of a new generation of committed development leaders from IFAD list B/C Member Countries; and (ii) to enhance the impact of IFAD-supported operations.

19. These goals will be achieved through the following objectives: (i) to build the capacity of IFAD list B/C Member Country students to compete for employment opportunities; and (ii) to increase the analytical and institutional knowledge required by IFAD-supported operations at project and country level.
20. The programme's main outputs will be: (i) built capacity of at least 120 students; (ii) 120 academic quality research studies, effectively disseminated around the world; and (iii) a meta-study analysing the field practicum reports and deliverables available until then, to draw broader lessons

VI. Implementation arrangements

21. The programme will be managed by the MDP Secretariat and implemented by each of the 27 MDP Programs. The MDP Secretariat will develop an online matching system and provide programme support, guidance and coordination. Each MDP will be responsible to support the students in the development of their proposals and supervise their work during the Field Practicum. The best studies will be presented at IFAD Headquarters in Rome and the International Conference on Sustainable Development in New York.
22. The Policy and Technical Advisory (PTA) Division will be responsible for the supervision of the grant, as part of their regular supervision tasks, through its administrative budget. The PTA grant Task Manager will be responsible to coordinate supervision activities with all concerned counterparts. Supervision activities will include: (i) annual review meetings along the side of ICDS conference with representatives of MDPs; (ii) semi-annual reviews, through video-conference, between IFAD and the MDP Secretariat; (iii) selected country visits by CPMs and/or PTA staff in synergy with regular country program activities
23. The Recipient shall submit 6-month unaudited statements of expenditures (SOEs) to IFAD and ensure that the entire programme implementation period is covered by audit, and submit a separate audit opinion letter on the grant's final SOE, duly completed by independent auditors. Both SOEs and audits shall be programme-wise and consolidate expenditures incurred by the Recipient and implementing partners, if any. Nevertheless, the Recipient shall remain solely and ultimately responsible for grant funds management and financial reporting viz. IFAD. In addition, the Recipient shall have its institutional accounts audited every year by independent auditors in accordance with international audit standards, and deliver to IFAD a copy of its audited financial statements, inclusive of a reference to the IFAD grant, within six months after the end of each fiscal year.

VII. Indicative programme costs and financing

24. Total programme costs of USD 1.538 million will be funded through an IFAD grant of USD 925,000 and financial contribution by the MDP Global Association of USD 613,000. Programme costs by component and activities are presented in the following table.

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

<i>Components^b</i>	<i>IFAD</i>	<i>Cofinancier^c</i>	<i>Total</i>
1. Support to students field work	525 000	118 000	643 000
2. Dissemination and scaling-up	101 000	477 000	578 000
3. Project Management	230 000	18 000	248 000
4. Overheads	69 000		69 000
Total	925 000	613 000	1 538 000

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

<i>Expenditure Categories^b</i>	<i>IFAD</i>	<i>Cofinancier^c</i>	<i>Total</i>
1. Salaries and Allowances	154 000	447 000	601 000
2. Consultancies	115 000	0	115 000
3. Travel and Allowances	548 000	136 000	684 000
4. Equipment and Materials	39 000	0	39 000
5. Workshops	0	30 000	30 000
6. Overheads/ Management Fees	69 000	0	69 000
Total	925 000	613 000	1 538 000

Results-based logical framework

	Objectives-hierarchy	Objectively verifiable indicators	Means of verification	Assumptions
Goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact of IFAD-supported operations enhanced New generation of committed development leaders from List B and C countries continuing their involvement in rural development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 60% positive feedback on impact of students work by IFAD projects and partners that hosted a student 70% of B/C students engaged/employed in rural development upon completion of the Master 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey among IFAD project managers Post-MDP survey replacement of B/C students Students self-assessment Project monitoring system 	<p>(A) IFAD projects and partners develop opportunities</p> <p>(A) Students in MDP institutions are interested in participating</p>
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased analytical and institutional knowledge required by IFAD-supported operations at project and country level Increased capacity of B/C students to compete in employment opportunities in rural development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80% positive feedback on students' Deliverables 50% of B/C students shortlisted for vacancies related to rural development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluations of Deliverables Surveys of IFAD in-country stakeholders Post-MDP survey replacement of B/C students Project monitoring system 	<p>(A) Project managers take into account analysis and recommendations as appropriate</p> <p>(A) Positive field experiences are followed by opportunities for students to continue involvement in rural development</p>
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 120 academic quality research studies, reports, and papers on subjects identified by IFAD projects and partners Recommendations from Meta-study to draw broader conclusion on relevance for IFAD and students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 120 quality deliverables for IFAD project and partners received 120 students whose studies, reports, and papers receive academic credit 120 students report successful research engagements 1 Meta study based on 65 student deliverables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project monitoring system Surveys of host project managers Pre- and post-experience surveys of participating students and faculty members 	<p>(R) Delay in production of studies due to long academic requirement</p> <p>(R) Field reports too academic in style to be useful for project</p> <p>(A) Successful matches</p> <p>(A) Effective faculty mentoring</p>
Key Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selecting, matching, and supporting 100 student/researchers Best studies/reports published in IFAD internal series; top 10% presented at IFAD HQ Overall project management 1 Meta-study on all outputs available from Y1-Y2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 120 projects requests up-loaded 120 students successfully placed 120 student papers/reports published in IFAD publications 20 student presentations at IFAD and/or Columbia conference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online platform (displaying requests and final products/deliverables) Project monitoring system IFAD publications/technical notes 	<p>(R) IFAD projects lack capacity to quickly select and support students</p> <p>(A) Development of on-line site for posting opportunities</p> <p>(A) Population of site with opportunities developed by IFAD projects and partners</p>