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IFAD

INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Consultation on the Seventh Replenishment of IFAD's Resources – Fourth Session

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ASSOCIATE PROFESSIONAL OFFICER PROGRAMME

I. INTRODUCTION

1. During the discussion of the paper on the geographic distribution of IFAD staff at the Third Session of the Consultation (document REPL.VII/3/R.4), there was general consensus on the need to remedy the current situation of Associate Professional Officers (APOs) being drawn exclusively from the member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) that fund their participation. In this regard, the Members of the Consultation requested a concrete and concise proposal to address the current imbalance in the representation of OECD member and non-member countries in IFAD's Associate Professional Officer Programme.

2. Two options are envisaged: (a) continue with the current APO Programme and enhance it by recruiting APOs from non-OECD countries; and (b) replace the existing APO Programme with a young professionals programme similar to the one administered by the World Bank.

II. BACKGROUND

3. IFAD's current APO Programme dates back to 1978 and operates as stipulated in the Human Resources Procedures Manual.

4. To date, IFAD has hosted a total of 121 APOs. Of these, it has retained 24 (20%) as staff members (after normal competitive procedures), 13 (10.7%) as consultants, and 14 (11.5%) as temporary professional staff. Other APOs have gone on to work at other United Nations agencies, NGOs, in the private sector and with national governments.

5. Under the existing arrangement, the salaries and benefits of APOs are funded by their home governments. Currently, all APOs are from OECD member countries.¹

6. In 2004, 13 of the 21 APOs were women (62%).

¹ OECD countries have on occasion financed a few candidates from developing countries on a one-off basis, although this has not occurred for some time.

III. DISCUSSION OF THE TWO OPTIONS

7. In order to strengthen the representation of non-OECD participants in the programme, IFAD has proposed expanding its APO Programme to ensure representation by non-OECD member countries – at the same level as APOs from OECD countries in 2004, i.e. 21 participants – for a trial period. The two alternatives for such expansion are described below.

A. Enhanced APO Programme

8. The enhanced programme would operate under the same principles and recruitment procedures as the current APO Programme:

- (a) The programme (i.e. the current component of OECD nationals funded by their governments plus an enhanced component comprised of non-OECD nationals funded by IFAD) would continue to sponsor young, university-trained nationals of IFAD Member States for a two-year period of capacity-building at IFAD (with the possibility of an extension for a third year) at the professional grade (P-1/P-2) level.
- (b) IFAD would identify areas for APO assignments and prepare position descriptions for transmittal to sponsoring Member States (in the case of OECD candidates) or for direct IFAD recruitment (in the case of non-OECD candidates). APO recruitment and selection would be conducted on a highly competitive basis by the Member State (for OECD candidates) or by IFAD (for non-OECD candidates). The final selection from among the shortlisted candidates in both cases would be done by IFAD.
- (c) The eligibility requirements would be as follows:
 - (i) candidates must be under 32 years of age;
 - (ii) candidates must possess a first university degree in a relevant discipline;
 - (iii) two years of relevant experience would be desirable; and
 - (iv) a working knowledge of English would be essential; knowledge of another official IFAD language – Arabic, French or Spanish – would be desirable and may be necessary, depending on the region of assignment.
- (d) Shortlisted candidates displaying the same merit level would be selected on the basis of gender in the case of OECD nationals, and on the basis of geographical representation and then gender in the case of non-OECD nationals.

9. Immediately upon recruitment, APOs would receive internal orientation, training and coaching coordinated by the Office of Human Resources and tailored to the APO's functional area.

10. During the course of their assignment at IFAD, APOs would be considered staff members. Upon completion of their assignment, they would be eligible to apply for longer-term employment with IFAD subject to a competitive recruitment and selection process.

11. APOs who are OECD nationals would still be funded by the respective Member State government, while non-OECD nationals would be funded through IFAD's regular budget.

12. The estimated costs of implementing the enhanced APO Programme are very tentative and are predicated on recruits from non-OECD countries enjoying the same entitlements as are extended to recruits from OECD member countries. The average annual cost of an APO is currently about

USD 130 000, bearing in mind that virtually all these recruits come from European OECD member countries. The estimated average cost per year of an APO from a non-OECD country would be approximately USD 156 000; this amount includes the costs entailed in recruitment and travel for candidates from different parts of the world. The first seven non-OECD APOs would begin in 2007, the next seven in 2008 and the final seven in 2009, with the last of the two-year programmes ending in 2011. The total cost to IFAD over the five-year period would be approximately USD 6.6 million, which would be included by tranches in the annual budget provisions as from 2007.

B. Young Professionals Programme

13. Alternatively, IFAD could launch a young professionals programme, similar to the World Bank's programme.

The World Bank's Young Professionals Programme

14. The World Bank's Young Professionals Programme (YPP) is designed for highly qualified and motivated young people skilled in areas relevant to the Bank's operations, such as economics, finance, education, public health, social sciences, engineering, urban planning and natural resources management.

15. To qualify for the YPP, candidates must be a citizen of a member country of the World Bank, be 32 years of age or younger when entering the programme, hold a master's degree or equivalent, be fluent in English, and have five and a half years of relevant professional experience or four and a half years of relevant experience combined with continued academic study at the doctoral level. The programme comprises rotational, on-the-job specialized training, a poverty immersion assignment and mentoring.

16. Initial appointments are for a period of two years, after which time the young professional is taken on by the Bank in a career position. Programme participants are hired at an entry-level professional grade based on the organization's business needs. The aim of the programme is to identify candidates with "T-shaped" skills, i.e. expertise in the form of both technical breadth and professional depth, including the ability to "see the bigger picture" and the client engagement and team skills that are essential to the Bank's work.

17. The selection process is as follows: applications are received and reviewed against selection criteria; the candidates selected are asked to submit certificates and referrals; candidates are then shortlisted to be interviewed (based on their detailed applications); during the interview, candidates are assessed for professional expertise, team skills and their ability to work in a multicultural environment and to view development holistically; the names of candidates who pass the interview stage are submitted to the final selection committee; and, finally, candidates are selected for employment as young professionals and join the Bank.

18. Since its inception in 1963, the YPP has recruited over 1 000 professionals who now occupy positions ranging from new recruits to vice-presidents in the Bank. The Bank also operates a Junior Professional Associates Program that allows professionals from member countries to work at the Bank for a two-year period. Although associates are not eligible for employment with the Bank for two years following the end of their appointment, alumni may rejoin the Bank later in their careers after gaining experience elsewhere and becoming experts in their professional fields.

19. Both the Young Professionals Program and the Junior Professional Associates Program are financed through the Bank's regular budget.

C. Comparison of the World Bank's Young Professionals Program and the Prospective IFAD Young Professionals Programme

20. The requirements for IFAD's young professionals programme would be identical to those set forth above in paragraph 8(c). However, there are a number of differences between the World Bank's YPP and IFAD's proposal for a young professionals programme. Candidates for the YPP are required to hold a master's or doctoral degree and have 4.5 to 5.5 years of experience, while the IFAD programme would require a bachelor's degree and two years of experience. The YPP guarantees employment after a two-year training and coaching period; the IFAD programme would not guarantee employment but would provide training and coaching for two years with a possible extension for a third year. Alumni of the proposed IFAD young professionals programme would be eligible for subsequent employment subject to the existence of a vacancy, competition and merit.

21. In terms of absorption capacity, IFAD has a much smaller professional staff than international financial institutions like the World Bank or specialized agencies like the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). If IFAD were to launch a young professionals programme as discussed in this document but comparable in size to the proposed enhanced APO Programme, it would each year have to absorb about 14 new staff members at the P-1/P-2 level, for a total of about 42 new staff members every three years. Given that IFAD has a total professional staff of around 140, this level of recruitment at the P-1/P-2 level would be impractical. On the other hand, if the prospective young professionals programme were sized to a level that IFAD could absorb, say two or three candidates a year, it would be too small to be worthwhile. A second issue would be the cost of such a young professionals programme. Assuming the programme would operate on two-year cycles, the cost to IFAD would be approximately USD 13.2 million over a three-year period. This would be twice as much as the proposed enhanced APO Programme, bearing in mind that the cost of APOs from OECD member countries is financed by their home governments.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

22. In view of the foregoing, IFAD has identified an enhanced APO Programme as the most viable option. Not only would it ensure continuity of the existing programme, but it has the added advantage of affording individuals from non-OECD countries the opportunity to take part in the programme for capacity-building, after which an associate professional may move on to a substantive position at IFAD or elsewhere in the United Nations system, the private sector or their home government. Moreover, the enhanced APO Programme would also contribute to increasing the geographical representation of IFAD staff (see selection criteria in paragraph 8(d) above), assigning clear responsibility to Member States for OECD candidates (under the current APO Programme arrangements) and to IFAD for non-OECD candidates (under the enhanced portion of the APO Programme).

V. RECOMMENDATION

23. The Consultation is invited to endorse the development of an enhanced APO Programme during 2006 – to become operational in 2007 – along the lines as set forth in paragraphs 8 to 12.

