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Enabling poor rural people
to overcome poverty

Minutes of the sixty-eighth session of the Evaluation Committee

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Evaluation Committee — Sixty-ninth Session
Rome, 7 October 2011

For: **Approval**

Minutes of the sixty-eighth session of the Evaluation Committee

1. These minutes cover the deliberations of the Evaluation Committee during its sixty-eighth session, held on 11 July 2011. Nine agenda items were discussed: (i) the minutes of the Evaluation Committee's sixty-seventh session; (ii) the minutes of the Evaluation Committee's sixth special session; (iii) the Preview of the results-based work programme and budget for 2012 and indicative plan for 2013-2014 of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD; (iv) the interim evaluation of the Sustainable Development Project for Agrarian Reform Settlements in the Semi-arid North-East (Dom Hélder Câmara Project) in Brazil; (v) the President's Report on the Implementation Status of Evaluation Recommendations and Management Actions (PRISMA) with comments by IOE; (vi) the Costed action plan for further development of the self-evaluation system; (vii) the Progress report on the action plan for the implementation of the findings and recommendations of the Peer Review of IFAD's Office of Evaluation and Evaluation Function; (viii) the Status of agreements at completion point; and (ix) other business.
2. All Committee members attended the session (Burkina Faso, Canada, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Mexico, Netherlands and Nigeria) with the exception of France. Observers were present from Brazil, China, Egypt, Sweden and Cyprus. The Committee welcomed Mr Danny Rahdiansyah, Second Secretary (Multilateral and Political Affairs), Alternate Permanent Representative of the Republic of Indonesia; and Mr Ronald Elkhuisen, Counsellor, Chargé d'affaires, a.i., from the Permanent Representation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The Committee was joined by IFAD's Associate Vice-President, Programmes, Programme Management Department (PMD); the Director, Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE); the Secretary of IFAD; the Director of the Latin America and the Caribbean Division; and other IFAD staff.

A. Minutes of the sixty-seventh session of the Evaluation Committee

3. The Committee discussed document EC 2011/68/W.P.2, the minutes of the sixty-seventh session of the Evaluation Committee for approval by members. The minutes were adopted with some changes in paragraph 25, as suggested by the delegate of Nigeria. These were reflected in the session's verbatim report.

B. Minutes of the sixth special session of the Evaluation Committee

4. The Committee discussed document EC 2011/68/W.P.3, containing the minutes of the sixth special session of the Evaluation Committee for approval by members. The Committee approved the minutes of its sixth special session without any change.

C. Preview of the results-based work programme and budget for 2012 and indicative plan for 2013-2014 of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD

5. The Committee discussed document EC 2011/68/W.P.5, the Preview of the results-based work programme and budget for 2012 and indicative plan for 2013-2014 of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD.
6. The Committee expressed its broad agreement with IOE's proposed objectives, divisional management results, work programme and budget for 2012. While agreeing with the emphasis IOE planned to devote to knowledge management and learning, the Committee invited IOE to further reflect on the title of the second strategic objective (promote effective knowledge management and learning) in the

next iteration of the document, in order to further emphasize the importance of learning.

7. IOE clarified that its budget would also be reviewed, as in the past, by the Audit Committee in September and November 2011, as well as by the Executive Board in September and December 2011. The IOE budget would be approved by the Governing Council in 2012, together with IFAD's administrative budget.
8. IOE and Management explained that it would be beneficial to undertake the evaluation of the IFAD Policy on Grant Financing in 2014-2015, given that by that time it would be easier to assess the results on the ground of grant-funded activities since the adoption of the policy in December 2009. In addition, the Committee agreed to bring forward the evaluation of IFAD's approach to policy dialogue to 2013.
9. Following a request by the Committee, IOE clarified that country programme evaluations were normally undertaken in countries with large portfolios and to support Management in preparing a new country strategic opportunities programme in the same country.
10. The Committee asked IOE for feedback on its initial experience in undertaking project completion report validations (PCRVs). In this regard, Management underlined the usefulness of PCRVs, particularly as they allowed IOE to undertake an assessment of all closed projects, rather than being confined to reviewing the performance of a small number of projects, as was the case in the past.
11. The Director, IOE remarked that IOE's new evaluation syntheses (e.g. of direct supervision and implementation support) were discussed widely with Management and staff as well as with other partners (e.g. the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)), before finalization and dissemination. The syntheses will also be discussed in the Evaluation Committee sessions. In addition to raising important systemic issues and documenting lessons learned, syntheses were used to identify key questions and hypotheses for corporate-level evaluations planned by IOE (e.g. of direct supervision and implementation support in 2012, and IFAD's approach to policy dialogue in 2013).
12. The Committee's attention was drawn to the fact that as in the past IOE had prepared the preview of its 2012 budget based on the budget parameters suggested by IFAD's Budget Unit, including the inflation factor for staff and non-staff costs and exchange rate. In this regard, IOE will continue to consult closely with the Budget Unit to obtain the final parameters in order to develop the 2012 IOE budget proposal for consideration by the Committee in October.
13. In light of the corporate change and reform agenda, IOE stated its intention to take part in the IFAD-wide job audit exercise. More generally, IOE would analyse its needs for human resource development, and reflect any requirements in the budget proposal presented to the October session of the Evaluation Committee. A provision for training would also be made in the proposal.
14. On human resources, the Director, IOE informed the Committee that efforts were being made to attract staff with experience in operations, as recommended by the Peer Review. In this regard, he informed the Committee that an experienced country programme manager had recently been transferred to IOE to fill a position made vacant by an evaluation officer's departure to the Asian Development Bank.
15. The Committee requested IOE and Management to keep it informed of any key evaluation-related in-house learning events that members could attend in the future, in order to strengthen the evaluation feedback loop between IFAD and its Governing Bodies.

D. Interim evaluation of the Sustainable Development Project for Agrarian Reform Settlements in the Semi-arid North-East (Dom Hélder Câmara Project) in Brazil

16. Committee members welcomed the discussion of the Dom Hélder Câmara Project evaluation, particularly as it provided them with an opportunity to recall their field visit to the project in May 2011, as part of their 2011 country visit. PMD expressed appreciation for both the evaluation's results and the way in which it was conducted.
17. Members noted the project's overall satisfactory rating, and its particular impact on human and social capital, empowerment, and food security and productivity.
18. Two areas of moderately satisfactory performance were efficiency and sustainability. Committee members noted the challenges of working in remote areas such as the semi-arid region of the north-east of Brazil. At the same time, members encouraged IFAD to continue its efforts to increase economic efficiency and the sustainability of benefits in the projects it funds. With regard to sustainability, IOE recalled that the 2007 Annual Report on the Results and Impact of IFAD's Operations (ARRI) had selected this as a key learning theme and devoted a chapter to its in-depth analysis. The Associate Vice-President, Programmes highlighted Management's efforts to improve the sustainability of benefits in IFAD-financed projects, for example through grass-roots institution building.
19. Given the achievements of the Dom Hélder Câmara Project, the Committee underlined the importance of documenting these experiences more widely and sharing them with other countries, within and beyond the Latin America region. PMD reassured the Committee that it considered knowledge management in Brazil of great importance. One example cited of its efforts in this area was a recent grant-funded initiative launched to document and share experiences in agricultural development in the semi-arid region of Brazil.
20. The Committee was pleased to note the project's focus on gender issues, rural youth and ethnic minorities, and encouraged Management to include such components in other projects funded in Brazil and elsewhere.
21. PMD underlined the importance of the project in terms of the additional resources (about US\$100 million) mobilized from a variety of sources, in addition to the US\$25 million loan provided by IFAD, which reflected the trust that other institutions placed in the Fund and its work in the north-east of Brazil.
22. Finally, upon the Committee's suggestion, IOE agreed to include in future evaluation reports, a summary paragraph at the end of each pertinent section to provide a clearer explanation of the ratings given to each evaluation criteria covered.

E. President's Report on the Implementation Status of Evaluation Recommendations and Management Actions with IOE's comments

23. The Committee considered document EC 2011/68/W.P.8, the President's Report on the Implementation Status of Evaluation Recommendations and Management Actions (PRISMA) with comments by IOE, together with Volume II, Agreement at completion point, recommendations and follow-up actions taken by the Programme Management Department (EC 2011/68/W.P.8/Add.1). Both documents were considered by the Committee prior to their consideration by the Executive Board in September.
24. The Committee welcomed the preparation and presentation of this report by Management, as well as the constructive comments provided by IOE; these represented a central tool for improving the learning loop between evaluation and

operations over time. Furthermore, the Committee noted a steady improvement in full follow-up on evaluation recommendations (from 57 per cent in 2009 to 71 per cent in 2011).

25. The Committee requested and received further clarification on, inter alia, the issues of timely resolution of agreements at completion point, the internal sharing of generally applicable recommendations and the large number of non-applicable recommendations in the Asia region.
26. With regard to the performance of government and government agencies, the Committee noted the increase in full follow-up on country-level recommendations. The Committee requested Management to include more information as to what measures were being deployed to enhance government follow-up and areas for improvement.
27. Members welcomed the special focus on sub-Saharan Africa in this edition of the PRISMA, while noting the difficulties encountered in the partnership between IFAD and the African Development Bank (AfDB). On this latter point, the Committee encouraged IFAD Management to reconsider its current collaboration strategy in order to ensure efficient cooperation and gain maximum benefit from the partnership. It offered assistance in conveying any feedback required to the Executive Board of the AfDB.
28. Finally, the Committee recognized that the inclusion of coverage and dedicated reporting on gender evaluation criteria introduced in 2011 was an important step in the preparation of specific gender recommendations in evaluations and took note that IOE would devote further emphasis to this issue.

F. Progress report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Peer Review of IFAD's Office of Evaluation and Evaluation Function

29. The Committee considered document EC 2011/68/W.P.4, the Progress report on the action plan for the implementation of the findings and recommendations of the Peer Review of IFAD's Office of Evaluation and Evaluation Function. As decided at the Committee's sixty-fifth session on 25 and 26 November 2010, the progress report contained a matrix showing the implementation status of each recommendation, together with more detailed information about action taken so far and with changes tracked against the previous version.
30. The Committee noted the progress made and requested that deadlines be included wherever actions had a foreseeable finalization date.
31. With regard to the item on the costed action plan for further development of the self-evaluation system, members noted that the nature of the action sought from the Executive Board (information or review) would be modified, if necessary, pending outcome of discussions in Convenors and Friends.

G. Costed action plan for further development of the self-evaluation system

32. The Committee considered document EC 2011/68/W.P.9, the Action plan for strengthening the self-evaluation system. In accordance with the Implementation of the recommendations of the Peer Review of IFAD's Office of Evaluation and Evaluation Function (EB 2010/99/R.6) and the response by IFAD Management (EB 2010/99/R.6/Add.2), this document presented a costed action plan to allocate funding and staff time from existing resources to strengthen the self-evaluation system, mainly to improve knowledge management and the quality and use of the project completion report process.

33. The Committee took note of the document, commenting that that this type of document would have benefited from more timely distribution to the Committee members.

H. Status of agreements at completion point

34. The Committee considered document EC 2011/68/W.P.7, the status of agreements at completion point and took note of the contents contained therein.

I. Other business

35. The Committee discussed the proposal to postpone the seventieth session of the Evaluation Committee from Friday, 2 December to Monday, 5 December. The proposal was made to accommodate a request from FAO as a result of the possible postponement of the 143rd session of the FAO Council in November by one week.
36. In the spirit of closer collaboration among the three Rome-based organizations, the Committee agreed to move the seventieth session of the Evaluation Committee to 5 December 2011.
37. The Committee expressed deep gratitude to the outgoing representatives of Indonesia (Mr Purnomo Ahmad Chandra, Counsellor Multilateral Affairs, Alternate Permanent Representative and Mr Danny Rahdiansyah, Second Secretary Multilateral and Political Affairs, Alternate Permanent Representative) and Mexico (Mr Diego Alonso Simancas Gutiérrez, Second Secretary, Alternate Permanent Representative), who will take up new assignments outside Italy. Members conveyed their appreciation to the representatives for their excellent contribution to the work of the Committee. The Committee also noted the insightful contribution of Mr Ronald Elkhuisen, Counsellor, Chargé d'affaires, a.i., who had attended the sixty-eighth session on behalf of the Netherlands. The Netherlands had been elected as member of the Audit Committee, and thus had agreed to release their seat on the Evaluation Committee following the sixty-eighth session.