

Document: EC 2011/70/W.P.2
Agenda: 3
Date: 24 November 2011
Distribution: Public
Original: English

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Enabling poor rural people
to overcome poverty

Draft minutes of the sixty-ninth session of the Evaluation Committee

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Evaluation Committee — Seventieth Session
Rome, 9 December 2011

For: Approval

Draft minutes of the sixty-ninth session of the Evaluation Committee

1. These minutes cover the deliberations of the Evaluation Committee during its sixty-ninth session, held on 7 October 2011. Eight agenda items were discussed: (i) the draft minutes of the Evaluation Committee's sixty-eighth session; (ii) IOE results-based work programme and budget for 2012 and indicative plan for 2013-2014; (iii) the Republic of Yemen country programme evaluation; (iv) the project completion report validation of the Post-Crisis Programme for Participatory Integrated Development in Rainfed Areas in Indonesia; (v) the synthesis report on IFAD's direct supervision and implementation support of IFAD-financed projects; (vi) the progress report on the action plan for implementation of the findings and recommendations of the Peer Review of IFAD's Office of Evaluation and Evaluation Function; (vii) an oral presentation by Management on the preparation of the IFAD gender policy; and (viii) other business.
2. All Committee members attended the session (Burkina Faso, Canada, France, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Mexico and Norway) with the exception of Nigeria. The Committee welcomed the representative for Norway, who replaced the Netherlands representative on the Committee after the sixty-eighth session. The Committee also welcomed to the session the new representatives of Canada, France, Indonesia and Mexico. Observers were present from Brazil, China and Cyprus. The Committee was joined by IFAD's Associate Vice-President, Programmes, Programme Management Department (PMD); the Director of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE); the Secretary of IFAD; the Director, Asia and the Pacific Division (APR); and other IFAD staff.

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

3. The Committee discussed document EC 2011/69/W.P.2 which contained the minutes of the sixty-eighth session of the Evaluation Committee for approval by members. The minutes were adopted with some changes to paragraph 6, as suggested by the delegate for Canada. These are reflected in the session's verbatim report and in the revised minutes (EC 2011/69/W.P.2/Rev.1).

B. Independent Office of Evaluation's results-based work programme and budget for 2012 and indicative plan for 2013-2014

4. The Committee discussed document EC 2011/69/W.P.3/Rev.1, the IOE results-based work programme and budget for 2012 and indicative plan for 2013-2014, before its final submission to the Audit Committee in November and the Executive Board in December 2011.
5. The Committee took note that IOE's proposed objectives, divisional management results, and work programme and budget for 2012 had previously been discussed by the Evaluation Committee, the Audit Committee and the Executive Board in September 2011, and broad agreement had been expressed with the proposal. The Committee expressed its appreciation to IOE for the efforts to maintain the budget at a lower level and to work with the same level of human resources in 2012 as in 2011.
6. IOE commented that since 2011 it had introduced a new evaluation criterion on gender equality and women's empowerment, and that each evaluation was required to report on the performance of IFAD-funded projects and country programmes in this area. In addition, IOE informed the Committee that a synthesis report on gender would be prepared in follow-up to the gender evaluation workshop

scheduled during the meeting of the Evaluation Cooperation Group of the multilateral development banks in Washington, D.C. in November 2011.

7. On the issue of the country programme evaluation (CPE) budget, IOE clarified that a differentiated approach was used to allocate funds for each exercise of this nature. The factors considered in the allocation included: (i) size of the country portfolio; (ii) country context; (iii) availability of evaluative evidence; and (iv) regional representation.
8. On learning and knowledge management, IOE underscored the importance it attached to strengthening its contribution to ensure that evaluation recommendations and lessons feed into the formulation of new operations, policies and strategies in a timely manner. For example, following each CPE, an in-country national round-table workshop was held to provide a useful basis for the preparation of the new country strategic opportunity programme (COSOP). IOE added that it participated in key in-house platforms and workshops, such as the Operational Strategy and Policy Committee and the knowledge share fairs to ensure a wider outreach of evaluation-based knowledge and lessons.
9. IOE cited a number of initiatives being pursued in support of evaluation capacity development, for example involving national officers in evaluation missions for learning purposes, contributing to regional evaluation initiatives such as the Shanghai International Programme for Development Evaluation Training (SHIPDET) and providing methodological inputs to strengthen the capacity of the impact unit at the Ministry of Agriculture in Jordan in the context of the related CPE.

C. Republic of Yemen CPE

10. The Committee considered the Yemen CPE, together with Management's comments on the report. The Committee commended IOE for having produced a high-quality report under challenging country circumstances, and IFAD Management and its partners for developing and supporting operations in a country affected by severe conflict over a prolonged period of time.
11. Members recognized the challenges of working in fragile states, and the complications that arose in such an environment. In this regard, the Committee recommended that IFAD undertake more comprehensive risk analysis at the time of design, including assessing the risks of non-engagement in such countries.
12. IOE clarified that each evaluation included a rigorous evidence trail, to enable the reader to see how the recommendations are anchored in the evaluation's conclusions how these are in turn based on the main findings of the evaluation report. Members' attention was drawn to the clear cross-referencing of paragraph numbers in the Yemen CPE, linking together the recommendations, conclusions and findings.
13. The improved performance of recent operations in Yemen was noted by the Committee, including the greater emphasis on employment generation, value chain development and public-private partnership. In this regard, the Associate Vice-President, PMD indicated that direct supervision and implementation support had provided IFAD with opportunities to contribute to improving project portfolio performance. He also recognized that the efficiency of IFAD operations in Yemen posed a challenge that needed to be addressed in the future. He noted that there might be a trade-off between improving project efficiency and IFAD's focus on assisting the rural poor in remote and marginalized areas.
14. Finally, IOE described the thorough approach used in attributing ratings to each evaluation criterion, which involved, inter alia, rigorous peer review within IOE to minimize inter-evaluator variability and discussions among all members of an evaluation team before report finalization.

D. Project Completion Report Validation of the Post-Crisis Programme for Participatory Integrated Development in Rainfed Areas in Indonesia

15. The Committee considered document EC 2011/69/W.P.5, the project completion report validation (PCRVR) of the Post-Crisis Programme for Participatory Integrated Development in Rainfed Areas in Indonesia, prepared by IOE. This was the first time the Committee had discussed a PCRVR, a new product introduced by IOE in line with the recommendation by the Peer Review of IFAD's Office of Evaluation and Evaluation Function completed in 2010.
16. Following an overview by the IOE Director of the purpose, objectives and methodological aspects of this new type of project evaluation, IOE delivered a presentation on the PCRVR report. The Committee welcomed the discussion of the report, the first one submitted for the Committee's consideration since the adoption of the new approach to project evaluations.
17. A discussion took place on how to provide ratings across evaluation criteria in the context of PCRVRs in the case of insufficient evidence pertaining to achieved results. The Committee noted that this was an important topic meriting further reflection.
18. IOE informed the Committee that the forthcoming Annual Report on the Results and Impact of IFAD Operations (ARRI), to be submitted to the Committee and the Board later this year, would include a section on systemic issues related to the preparation of project completion reports, which would help Management improve the quality of these documents in the future.

E. Synthesis report on IFAD's direct supervision and implementation support

19. The Committee discussed and welcomed the synthesis report on direct supervision and implementation support of IFAD-financed projects, another new product introduced by IOE following the Peer Review of IFAD's Office of Evaluation and Evaluation Function. The Committee also noted with satisfaction that the synthesis report would feed into the forthcoming corporate-level evaluation (CLE) of direct supervision and implementation support, to be undertaken by IOE in 2012-2013.
20. In expressing its appreciation for a good report, the Committee made a number of observations, to which IOE and IFAD Management provided further clarifications. Commending the Fund on the implementation of the Supervision and Implementation Support Policy, the Committee suggested that IOE, in the course of the CLE, assess whether the Fund should pursue a standardized approach to direct supervision or if the approach should be tailored to regional/country needs.
21. Direct supervision should also apply to the grant programme. In this regard, the Committee discussed the issue of whether the forthcoming CLE should assess the supervision of the country programme as a whole rather than focus solely on project supervision. Moreover, the Committee was reassured that the risk dimension of supervision in fragile states was currently taken into account at project design.
22. Finally, the Committee was informed that the CLE would also look at a possible paradigm shift, that is, whether direct supervision provided the best option for the Fund.

F. 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

23. The Committee considered document EC 2011/69/W.P.7, the final progress report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Peer Review of IFAD's Office of Evaluation and Evaluation Functions. As decided at the Committee's sixty-fifth session on 25-26 November 2010, the progress report contained a matrix showing the implementation status of each recommendation, together with more detailed information on action taken so far, with changes tracked against the previous version.
24. The Committee noted that the majority of the items had been completed, apart from those tasks of an ongoing nature or with longer implementation times.
25. The Committee appreciated the efforts by both IOE and IFAD Management over the course of the two-year process, from the Peer Review to subsequent implementation and regular updating of the Evaluation Committee and the Executive Board on this important matter.
26. The Committee welcomed this final report and looked forward to being informed of further progress as and when required.

G. Oral presentation on the preparation of the IFAD gender policy

27. Management gave an oral presentation on the preparation of the gender policy.
28. Management informed the Committee that the IFAD gender policy would be transmitted to the December 2011 sessions of the Evaluation Committee and of the Executive Board, respectively.
29. Management cited some issues being addressed in preparing the policy: in particular (i) the difficulty of identifying good practices in terms of gender equity; (ii) the extent to which gender issues at headquarters and at country level should be addressed; and (iii) the difficulty of identifying partners conversant with gender issues in agriculture and rural development.
30. The Committee welcomed the presentation and urged the Fund to devote the necessary time to produce a quality document in a timely fashion for submission in December 2011.

H. Other business

31. The Committee discussed the proposal to postpone the seventieth session of the Evaluation Committee from Monday, 5 December to Friday, 9 December 2011, and agreed to move the session to 9 December 2011 as suggested.