

**EVALUATION OF THE SWISS AGENCY FOR DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION-INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR
AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION PARTNERSHIP**

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Summary

This report is based on an evaluation of Phase III of the partnership agreement between the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC) and the Independent Office of Evaluation (IOE) of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The evaluation was designed to address two objectives:

- Assessing the results of the Partnership, and the opportunities and challenges in its implementation.
- Generating findings and recommendations that could inform possible new partnerships between SDC and IOE in the future.

It was conducted between May and August, 2012, and was based on a document review, interviews with key staff and officials at IFAD and SDC, and an analysis of financial documents relevant to Partnership operations.

Findings and conclusions

The Partnership with IOE is part of a more general agreement between SCD and IFAD that was initiated in 2001, and extended in 2004 and 2008. This last phase is scheduled to end on December 31, 2012.

Phase III of the Partnership is based on three objectives:

- Investing in innovations intended to test new methods, models, and approaches to evaluation work.
- Supporting the development of IFAD's self-evaluation capabilities through strengthening self- and independent evaluation methods.
- Promoting learning and strengthening knowledge exchange among SDC, IFAD, and others concerning lessons and insights on key thematic issues emerging from evaluations of agriculture and rural development projects and programs.

Overall, the evaluation concludes that the Partnership has performed well in most of these areas during Phase III. It helped IOE to build on a previously-supported joint evaluation with the African Development Bank's Operations Evaluation Department to develop good practices for undertaking such evaluations. It also helped IOE to conduct a stocktaking exercise in China and India as part of an effort to define IOE's role in building evaluation capacity among developing countries. And it allowed IOE to update its guidelines for undertaking learning workshops in which to share evaluation methods, as well as substantive findings.

The Partnership has been especially effective in helping to strengthen self-evaluation processes in IFAD. It was instrumental in promoting a harmonization agreement between IOE and IFAD's Programme Management Department in 2006 and to build on that success during Phase III with newly-published guidelines on project self-evaluation and independent validation, as well as stronger project monitoring and evaluation systems. It helped IFAD to develop a new evaluation manual, translate it into several

languages, and disseminate it widely. SDC was able to adapt elements of IFAD's evaluation approach to its own work, thereby strengthening its own evaluation system.

There has been somewhat less success in the area of knowledge exchange within and between SDC and IFAD on thematic issues, however. Exchanges on substantive issues have not been numerous, and SDC interviewees reported that many SDC program staff are not well-aware either of the Partnership or of the lessons learned through the evaluations it has supported.

For the most part, there have been few implementation issues. Communication between SDC and IOE was affected negatively somewhat by SDC's re-organization, although the completion of that process should help in the future.

Viewed more broadly, Partnership activities have supported transformative changes in how IFAD does its work. Partnership-supported evaluations of IFAD's field presence pilot program and direct supervision and implementation support activities have influenced some of the most far-reaching changes in IFAD's working model in its history. And IOE's current evaluation of aspects of institutional efficiency could have similar effects. It also has allowed IOE to develop its *Annual Report on Results and Impact of IFAD Operations* into a thematic instrument for institutional learning. These are major accomplishments for independent evaluation at IFAD.

This Partnership has been successful for a number of reasons: the evaluation Partnership is embedded in a broader agreement between IFAD and SDC that allows for a wide range of cooperation between the institutions; Switzerland has been a particularly active member of the Board of Executive Directors, especially on evaluation issues; SDC and IFAD are similar in scale, share many common objectives in agriculture and rural development, and are close geographically, helping to make the relationship between the two organizations more productive than those with much larger institutions; and the fact that IOE's director had been associated with SDC helped to facilitate cooperation.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are offered for consideration by the partners, should they continue the Partnership:

- The Partners should develop an outcome- and impact-oriented results framework
- More regular interactions between the parties should be undertaken, using available interactive systems, such as teleconferencing to save on travel and staff time costs.
- Mutual learning and knowledge sharing should concentrate more on substantive findings and lessons than on evaluation methods and approaches. Workshops could be supplemented by videoconferences, webinars, and other technology-based information sharing methods.
- Further methodological development should emphasize joint and impact evaluation, which are increasingly important in development evaluation.
- As part of its support for evaluation capacity-building in developing countries, the Partnership could include a program allowing secondment of country staff to IOE.

Introduction

This report is based on an evaluation of Phase III of the Partnership agreement between the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC) and the Independent Office of Evaluation (IOE) of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The evaluation examined both the extent to which the Partnership has achieved its primary objectives during this Phase, and how well it has been implemented. It also reflects the findings from reviews of the first two phases of the Partnership, as requested in the Terms of Reference (see Annex A for the full TOR). Based on the evaluation findings and conclusions, the report makes several recommendations on possible improvements and new directions for the Partnership, should the respective organizations choose to continue their collaboration.

Overview of the Partnership

The SDC-IFAD Partnership in Evaluation was initiated in 2001 to achieve goals of mutual interest to the two organizations. The Partnership has been renewed twice, in 2004 and 2008, and will expire on December 31, 2012, unless a new agreement is concluded before then.

Over time the specific objectives of the Partnership have changed in response to the changing development environment, but the basic impetus behind it has remained relatively constant: to strengthen the evaluation system in IFAD in order to improve learning and accountability, while providing opportunities for SDC to learn from IFAD's experiences in both methods and substantive findings.

Objectives of this review and methods

The evaluation was designed to address two objectives:

- Assessing the results of the Partnership, and the opportunities and challenges related to its implementation.
- Generating findings and recommendations that could inform a possible new partnership between SDC and IOE in the future.

To address these objectives, the evaluation focused on two major sets of questions: (1) How well has the Partnership met its objectives for Phase III? (2) How well has the Partnership been implemented?

The evaluation was conducted between May and August, 2012. It was based on three major sources of information. First, a document review was carried out that included the Partnership agreements, annual Partnership reports, memoranda of other interactions between SDC and IOE staff, evaluation policy and guidance documents, and selected IOE reports. Second, a series of interviews was conducted with 20 staff and officials at IFAD and SDC, including some retired senior officials (see Annex B for a list of interviewees). Most of these interviews were held during a field visit to both IFAD and SDC in May and June. Others were completed by telephone and in Washington, DC. Difficulties in contacting some former officials delayed completion of the interviews, but the information proved valuable. Third, an analysis of financial documents relevant to Partnership operations was carried out based on information

supplied by IFAD. Finally, in a few instances data from other organizations were used as comparators in analyzing the Partnership. The evaluation was carried out in accordance with generally accepted evaluation standards.

How well has the Partnership met its objectives for Phase III?

The current phase of the Partnership has three major objectives:

- Investing in innovations intended to test new methods, models, and approaches to evaluation work.
- Supporting the development of IFAD's self-evaluation capabilities through strengthening self- and independent evaluation methods.
- Promoting learning and strengthening knowledge exchange among SDC, IFAD, and others concerning lessons and insights on key thematic issues emerging from evaluations of agriculture and rural development projects and programs.

This section provides findings on the extent to which these objectives have been met. Overall, it finds significant progress in meeting the objectives, but with areas that could be addressed in a next phase of the Partnership.

Developing evaluation methods and approaches

From the beginning, the Partnership has supported a number of initiatives aimed at strengthening the evaluation of IFAD development activities. Importantly, it has contributed to evaluations that have had transformative effects on how IFAD does its work in a number of areas. The most striking example is the way the Partnership enabled the evolution of the *Annual Report on Results and Impact of IFAD Operations* (ARRI) into a tool for improved institutional learning by focusing on specific themes each year. This evolution, begun during Phase II, has been sustained and enhanced during Phase III. Among the recent topics have been sustainability and innovation, project-level monitoring and evaluation in the country context, access to markets, environmental and natural resources management, efficiency, and policy dialog. Each of these topics addressed by the ARRI has been cited by interviewees as an important contributor to sharpening IFAD policies, strategies, and approaches to agriculture and rural development.

Other examples include two important corporate-level evaluations carried out during Phase II, one on a field presence pilot program, and the other on direct supervision and implementation support. With funds from the Partnership, IOE was able to strengthen the methodologies and extend the sample sizes for these evaluations, thereby enhancing their rigor. Interview respondents at both SDC and IFAD reported that these evaluations have led to major changes in the operating model of IFAD. They have laid the basis for IFAD's enhanced country presence arrangements and direct supervision and implementation support, which later evaluations have found are essential features for enhancing IFAD's development effectiveness. Indeed, a synthesis of IOE's evaluations on direct supervision and

implementation called it “one of the most far-reaching changes since the Fund was established.”¹ Interviewees at SDC also cited this work as particularly important in helping to bring about changes at IFAD they had long supported.

This transformative work has continued during Phase III. The ongoing corporate-level evaluation looking into various issues related to institutional efficiency, for example, has the potential to contribute significantly to the change and reform agenda of the Fund.

Another major Partnership achievement was a joint evaluation of agriculture and rural development with the African Development Bank’s Operations Evaluation Department, the first of its kind for IOE.² Carried out during Phase II, this was an important evaluation not only for its substantive findings but also because it enhanced the partnership between IFAD and AfDB and established the basis on which IOE was able to develop good practices for undertaking joint evaluations during Phase III.

Joint evaluations have become an increasingly important part of development evaluation work as a result of the Paris Declaration, Accra Agenda for Action, and Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, all of which have stressed increasing joint work in development. Joint development programs provide a powerful rationale for joint evaluation efforts.

But joint evaluations require sound guidance on when and how they should be undertaken. Prior experience has identified a number of benefits, but also some impediments to successfully carrying them out in practice. A World Bank review undertaken by its Independent Evaluation Group found that conducting evaluations jointly helped to identify key constraints and gaps in development assistance, while reducing the costs to developing countries and contributing to increased harmonization in evaluation standards and practices. However, these benefits were somewhat offset by higher transaction costs for the participating development organizations and reporting delays, threatening the timeliness of the evaluation findings and lessons.³ The Partnership’s support in Phase III for developing guidance based on the prior experience with AfDB, therefore, was an important accomplishment that should prove helpful in maximizing the benefits from conducting evaluations jointly with partners, while minimizing the costs and risks.

A second area of growing interest is impact evaluation of development work. Several interviewees in SDC mentioned that there is increasing demand on the part of Parliament for empirical demonstration of the effectiveness of Swiss development assistance. Sound impact evaluations can provide such evidence, leading to better decisions on how development aid is used. IOE participates in the international community’s Network of Networks on Impact Evaluation, as well a United Nations task force on impact evaluation.

¹ IFAD’s *Direct Supervision and Implementation Support: Evaluation Synthesis*, 2012, p. iii.

² *Towards Purposeful Partnerships in African Agriculture*, 2009.

³ Fareed H. A. Hassan, “Partnership in Joint Country Assistance Evaluations: A Review of World Bank Experience,” Washington: World Bank, 2005.

The Partnership has provided support for developing impact evaluation methods beginning with Phase I, and continuing through Phase III. Should it continue, this could be an area ripe for additional Partnership activities. Such activities could include a limited number of impact evaluations carried out by IOE, a synthesis of impact evaluation findings, and/or reviews of the quality of impact evaluations being carried out as part of ongoing projects.⁴

Finally, during Phase III the Partnership also helped IOE to conduct a stocktaking exercise in China and India as part of an effort to define IOE's role in evaluation capacity development (ECD) in developing countries. This allowed IOE to update its guidelines for undertaking learning workshops in which to share both evaluation methods and substantive findings. Evaluation capacity building is another major thrust of international development policy, so this activity helped to keep IOE moving in the direction of other development evaluation offices.

However, the Partnership has not been active to date in helping to train developing country evaluators. Given its size and resources, IOE is not likely to undertake a major program of such training, but there are other steps it could take with Partnership support. For example, a number of development agencies, including the World Bank and the Australian Agency for International Development, have provided secondments of staff from developing countries to work with their evaluation offices as a way of building country evaluation capacity. A review of literature on secondments found that if done strategically they can provide not only learning for the individual, but also a range of benefits to the organization, including skills gains, broader contacts with other organizations, and insights into new ways of doing their work.⁵

SCD, through additional support from its Global Institutions Division, also has provided some support for IOE staff to participate in the International Program on Development Evaluation Training (IPDET) at Carleton University in Ottawa. That support, while limited, has been used effectively, thanks in part to SDC's flexibility in how the funds are divided among staff. The increased internal capacity in IOE should be reflected in stronger evaluations over time.

Strengthening IFAD's self-evaluation system

The Partnership has been effective in helping to strengthen self-evaluation processes in IFAD. Supported by Swiss Alternate Members on the IFAD Executive Board, the Partnership was instrumental in promoting a harmonization agreement between IOE and IFAD's Programme Management Department in 2006. In turn, this has led during Phase III to the adoption of the newly-published

⁴ See for example, Independent Evaluation Group, *Impact Evaluation in Agriculture: An Assessment of the Evidence*, Washington: World Bank, 2011.

⁵ Rob Barkworth, "Secondments: A Review of Current Research," Brighton, UK: Institute for Employment Studies, 2004.

guidelines on project self-evaluation and independent validation, as well as stronger project monitoring and evaluation systems.⁶

It also helped IFAD to develop a new evaluation manual, translate it into several languages, and disseminate it widely.⁷ The manual is based on generally-accepted good practice standards in international development evaluation. But it goes beyond the broad generalities of those standards to provide a clear discussion of how evaluation principles and methods should be applied to agriculture and rural development issues.

SDC also has derived direct benefits from this aspect of the Partnership. It has adapted elements of IFAD's evaluation approach to its own work, and participated in a workshop in Bern at which staff of both institutions exchanged lessons on monitoring and evaluation issues. Interviewees at SDC and IFAD cited the value of these exchanges on evaluation issues for their respective organizations.

Promoting learning and knowledge exchange

There has been less success in strengthening knowledge exchange within and between SDC and IFAD on thematic issues, however. With Phase III Partnership support, IOE developed issues papers on access to markets and on environment and natural resource management issues, and conducted a workshop on the latter. IOE also has adopted a thematic approach to the ARRI, as discussed above. This allows for a broader perspective on the findings from evaluation, which should facilitate learning both within and outside IFAD.⁸ IOE also organized the well-received workshop at SDC to share its experiences on the IFAD self-evaluation system work.

However, exchanges on substantive issues have been infrequent. The Partners now are taking steps to address this area. In September 2012 IFAD hosted a learning workshop at which SDC staff shared experiences on policy dialog in the context of the 2012 ARRI. A continuation of the Partnership would facilitate further such exchanges in the future.

A number of interviewees suggested that knowledge sharing was affected by process of restructuring that SDC underwent during Phase III. However, they indicated that it was likely that the new structure will be more conducive to such sharing. Having a central point of contact in the Food Security Division should prove helpful in this regard, though it is too early to reach any conclusions on this.

Nonetheless, SDC interviewees agreed that IOE has been responsive and flexible in meeting requests for information when asked, citing this as a positive aspect of the Partnership. IOE interviewees also indicated an eagerness to increase the sharing of findings and lessons between the two organizations, as well as with other partners. The general consensus among interviewees was that in any future

⁶ *Guidelines on Project Completion Report Validation and Project Performance Assessment*, 2012.

⁷ *Evaluation Manual: Methodology and Processes*, 2009.

⁸ IOE, *Annual Report on Results and Impact of IFAD Operations*, 2011.

partnership a more regular and more strategic approach to these activities would be helpful. This is discussed below, in the section on communications.

Finally, IOE has conducted workshops share knowledge with in-country partners. The Partnership could help open these events to broader participation by supporting videoconferencing or webinars.

How well has the Partnership been implemented

The second set of evaluation issues revolves around the implementation of the Partnership. In this area, the evaluation focused on implementation arrangements, communications, and financial management. While not many issues emerged, there were some areas where improvements could be made.

Implementation arrangements

For the most part, there have been few implementation issues. There were no reports of conflicts between the partners, and interviewees reported that day-to-day working relationships are good. The general arrangements through which the Partnership works are common to such partnerships between bilateral and multilateral aid agencies. The basic outline of the Partnership is laid out in the series of three agreements signed by the respective parties. These established the objectives and level of support for each phase. The management arrangements are determined largely by IFAD's general policies, and are not specific to IOE.

One issue that arose through a review of the documents, as well as in a few of the interviews, is that the Partnership's results framework is geared to activities and outputs rather than outcomes and impacts. For example, the objective of investing in innovation in new methods and approaches is operationalized as:

- Developing good practices for undertaking joint evaluations.
- Updating guidelines for undertaking learning workshops.
- Stocktaking of existing ECD efforts in China and India, and defining IOE's role in ECD.

Each of these is an output. But the downstream results expected from them are not well-articulated. Presumably, these are intended to meet the objective of investing in testing new evaluation methods, models and approaches. Surely the end desired is not merely to conduct such testing. Rather, the objective presumably is to improve the quality and relevance of evaluations so that the findings, lessons, and recommendations are applied to improve development outcomes. Indeed, those are the strategic objectives of IOE, as discussed in the IFAD work program.⁹ It would be useful if the Partnership's

⁹ IFAD's 2012 results-based programme of work and administrative and capital budgets, and the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD's results-based work programme and budget for 2012 and indicative plan for 2013-2014, p. 10.

objectives more closely reflected IOE's, and included a results framework that adequately captured and measured the outcomes and impacts of the Partnership's activities, not just their outputs.

Communications and exchanges

Formal communication between SDC and IOE occurs on a regular basis through an annual Partnership meeting and periodic updates. The relative proximity of the two organizations also has facilitated frequent interactions.

Still, experience with similar partnerships in other organizations indicates that communications gaps are a common issue. This stems from the fact that each of the partners has its own, usually very heavy, work program and limited staff with which to implement it. Often, time differences and distance further limit opportunities for interaction. This militates against regular communication between partners, even with the best of goodwill and effort.

In the case of SDC and IOE, time and distance are not major barriers to communication. Moreover, the similarities in scale and missions between SDC and IFAD further facilitate communication. And, indeed, interviewees in both SDC and IOE confirm that they have regular informal communications, including visits between their offices. That said, it might be useful for the partners to consider ways that their communications can be more regularized. Modern information technology, such as videoconferencing, allows for more frequent meetings that do not require travel, which imposes monetary and time costs that act as barriers. It might be helpful for the partners to consider having more frequent interchanges on general Partnership issues using such technologies to allow updating and discussion during the space between annual meetings. Formalizing a calendar for such meetings could ensure that issues are brought up and addressed on a regular basis, reducing the likelihood that misunderstandings develop from communication gaps.

As noted above, there have been some excellent communications between the organizations on evaluation issues, but exchanges on substantive issues have been not been numerous. SDC interviewees reported that many program staff are not well-aware either of the Partnership or of the findings and lessons learned through the evaluations it has supported. And SDC staff indicated that they would welcome opportunities to learn more from evaluations. In addition to learning workshops, other opportunities are available for such sharing. For example, webinars have proven remarkably successful at many organizations, and require much less in the way of time and logistics to organize than traditional workshops.

Financial management of the Partnership

A review of the financial management of the Partnership did not reveal any major problems. IOE manages the funds allocated to it under the more general agreement with SDC, as is the case for other units. IOE also prepares regular statements on the use of funds for SDC, in addition to the annual validated statements that come out only within 180 days of the end of the fiscal year. Because of recording lags, the data in IOE tend to be more up-to-date on a real-time basis than the central system's, but this is not an issue.

IOE's budget has been approximately USD 6 million per year over the period of Phase III. The Partnership has provided a total of CHF 1.5 million from 2009-2012 amounting to about 6.5 percent of IOE's annual budget. By way of comparison, the World Bank's Independent Evaluation Group has about USD 6.2 million in trust fund resources, which amounts to about 19 percent of its administrative budget. However, USD 5 million of that is dedicated to a specific ECD program, and is not available for other IEG activities, leaving USD 1.2 million, or about 4 percent of IEG's total budget for general evaluation support, which is in a similar range to the SDC-IOE partnership.

IFAD charges a five percent fee for administration of the Partnership funds. This is in line with other international financial institutions. For example, that is the same percentage that the Asian Development Bank charges on its Poverty Reduction Technical Assistance Trust Fund.¹⁰ The World Bank adopted a policy in 2008 that requires full cost recovery, but this also amounts to a figure in or near the five percent range.

Funds sometimes have been disbursed from the trust fund more slowly than planned, but this is common in such arrangements, and overall IFAD officials indicate that IOE has been more timely in this regard than many other IFAD offices under the Partnership.

Lessons on Partnership implementation

Overall, the Partnership has been implemented successfully, without any major problems. A number of factors have contributed to this success. First, the evaluation Partnership is embedded in a broader agreement between IFAD and SDC. This allows for a wide range of cooperation between the institutions, and a deeper understanding of what each organization needs from the Partnership. SDC officials confirmed that they intend to continue their relationship with IFAD in the future, though they were not committal as to the IOE component.

Second, nearly all SDC interviewees noted that SDC and IFAD are similar in scale, share many common objectives in agriculture and rural development, and are close geographically. From SDC's point of view, these parallels help to make the relationship between the two organizations more productive than those with much larger institutions, such as the World Bank, where relationships and influence are more diffuse.

Third, Switzerland has been a particularly active Alternate Member of the Executive Board, especially on evaluation issues. That active role has been important in complementing and reinforcing IOE's efforts to strengthen the IFAD self-evaluation system. The fact that Switzerland has been represented on the Executive Board's Evaluation Committee for all but two years during the period covered by the Partnership has been especially important. From that position, it was able to promote the independence of IOE and stronger self-evaluation within IFAD. At the same time, several former Swiss Executive Board alternate members interviewed have reported that because of the Partnership they

¹⁰ "Operations Evaluation Department, Asian Development Bank's Poverty Reduction Technical Assistance Trust Funds: Poverty Reduction Cooperation Fund and Cooperation Fund in Support of the Formulation and Implementation of National Poverty Reduction Strategies," Manila: Asian Development Bank, 2008.

were better-informed about, and therefore better-positioned to take action on, policy and other issues coming before them.

Finally, the fact that the Director of IOE came from SDC was cited by a number of interviewees as a factor that facilitated both Swiss support for IOE and communication between the two organizations. This was regarded as helpful, but with the understanding that the Partnership was not dependent on this factor.

Conclusions and recommendations for future directions

The conclusions to be drawn from this review fall into three areas: the benefits achieved for both partners; the areas in need of improvement if the Partnership is renewed; and possible future directions for the Partnership.

Benefits for both partners

The benefits for IOE are fairly obvious. The additional resources made available to it have allowed for a number of initiatives that would have been difficult to manage under the regular administrative budget. Without the Partnership, at least some of these likely would have been delayed or not accomplished at all. The major ones include:

- Strengthening the quality and rigor of IOE evaluations and the ARRI, thereby helping to promote transformative changes within IFAD.
- Testing new approaches, such as joint evaluations, that will be important for future evaluative work.
- Creating a new Evaluation Manual that brings IOE standards and processes into conformity with international good practice standards.
- Facilitating the harmonization of evaluation criteria and processes between IOE and IFAD operations.
- Encouraging better monitoring and evaluation systems in IFAD projects and programs, which also should provide more valid and reliable data for IOE's independent evaluations.
- Early work on ECD activities, laying the ground for more advanced efforts in the future.
- Better understanding of how to promote learning and knowledge exchange going forward.

These benefits are substantial, not only for IOE, but for IFAD as a development organization, and for the development business more generally, especially in the area of agriculture and rural development. However, there also were benefits for SDC:

- The Partnership has helped to amplify the efforts by Switzerland, through the Executive Board, to encourage strong independent evaluation at IFAD as a way of responding to parliamentary

demand for accountability on the results of development activities, as well as to promote transformations within IFAD, such as its increased field presence and direct supervision and implementation support initiatives.

- At the same time, SDC's close relationship with IOE has provided it with a more in-depth understanding of what is being learned from independent evaluation, which it has been able to use effectively to affect IFAD policies in a number of areas.
- SDC also has been able strengthen its own evaluation system by learning from and adapting IOE's evaluation criteria and processes. This has had the added benefit of making it easier for SDC to harmonize with other development agencies, especially the International Financial Institutions, which should allow for more joint evaluations with lower transaction costs.
- Because of the parallels in size and areas of interest, as well as the geographic proximity of IFAD, SDC has been able to participate more fully in the Partnership's activities than it can at some larger partner organizations, such as the World Bank.

Areas in need of improvement

However, the review also found several areas where improvements can be made, if the Partnership is renewed:

- The current results framework is focused only on outputs and needs to become more outcome- and impact-oriented.
- Communication, while good at the level of formal interactions, could be strengthened, especially in bringing the findings and lessons of independent evaluation to relevant operational staff in both SDC and IFAD, and to country-level development partners.

In addition, any future Partnership should take account of new possibilities, as well as building on efforts where investments already have been made. These should reflect the changes taking place across the development evaluation landscape, such as greater focus on joint and impact evaluation. The investment in ECD also should be leveraged to contribute to the growing efforts at building developing country capacities.

Recommendations on future directions

Although the Partnership is scheduled to expire on December 31, 2012, the parties may wish to continue their relationship with a new agreement to commence upon completion of the current one. This would allow the gains from the past decade to be further cemented, while opening new opportunities to move forward on the shared interests of SDC and IOE.

If the Partnership is renewed, several specific areas should be addressed in its management and objectives:

- The Partners should develop an outcome- and impact-oriented results framework.

- While annual meetings and occasional visits are important in maintaining the Partnership, both parties could benefit from more regular interactions. It might be useful, for example, to have regular updates on a quarterly basis on management issues around the Partnership as a way of ensuring that all parties are informed and have shared expectations. Such updates could be delivered using available interactive systems, such as teleconferencing. This would not add materially to the costs in travel and staff time of maintaining the Partnership, while providing opportunity for exchanges that could strengthen relationships and ensure smooth operation.
- Mutual learning and knowledge sharing should continue to be a key part of the Partnership. This was the weakest area of performance found in the evaluation, but remains an important objective for any partnership arrangement in order to ensure mutual benefits. First, the Partners should develop a specific strategy for knowledge sharing rather than relying on ad hoc interactions. Second, to reach a broader SDC and IFAD audience, such sharing should concentrate more on substantive findings and lessons than on evaluation methods and approaches. Program staff are much more likely to be interested in such sharing because it is relevant to their work. Third, they should continue to hold workshops, but also consider using teleconferencing, webinars, and other technology-based methods for information sharing activities.
- Further methodological development also can be supported under a renewed Partnership. Having accomplished a great deal in improved project evaluation, the Partnership might now turn its attention to other areas, with emphasis on joint evaluation and impact evaluation. Joint evaluations can be complex and carry high transaction costs for the donor agencies, but they also can reduce burdens on developing countries by limiting the number of evaluative interactions in which they need to take part. The Partnership can provide valuable resources to help meet the additional costs of such work. And the adoption of many elements of IFAD's evaluation methods and approaches by SDC should help keep transaction costs lower than in many other circumstances. Impact evaluation is becoming increasingly important in the development arena. Experience suggests that an independent evaluation unit such as IOE will have only limited opportunities to conduct impact evaluations, but could play an important role in developing standards for such evaluations carried out in conjunction with IFAD work, and in assessing the quality of such evaluations. The renewed Partnership could also support the further enhancement of the Evaluation Manual to reflect these changes in the development context at large, as well as the internal evolution within IFAD.
- In order to further contribute to evaluation capacity development, the Partnership also could consider financing in IOE a staff secondment from a developing country. While modest in scale, such secondments can complement broad training programs, such as IPDET, with more in-depth learning from hands-on experience and individual mentoring, which can be especially effective.

Annex A: Terms of Reference

Review of IFAD IOE- SDC Partnership Achievement

Draft Terms of Reference - 10 February 2012

A. Introduction

1. A Partnership Agreement on Development Effectiveness through Evaluation was signed between the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC) and IFAD's Independent Office of Evaluation (IOE) on 22 May 2001. The first phase of the partnership was implemented over a three year period from May 2001 to June 2004. The second phase of the same partnership agreement was signed in December 2004 and expired in December 2008. Phase III is now being implemented over a period from 1st April 2009 to 31st December 2012.
2. The partnership has three objectives: (i) Investing in innovation to test new methodologies, models and approaches to evaluation work; (ii) supporting the development of IFAD's self-evaluation capabilities through strengthening project level monitoring and evaluation systems, including the further harmonization of self-evaluation and independent evaluation methodologies; and (iii) promoting learning and strengthening knowledge exchange with SDC, IFAD and others on lessons learned and insights on key thematic issues emerging from evaluations of agriculture and rural development projects and programmes.
3. Since 2012 is the last year of the partnership, it is proposed to plan a review of the partnership activities since 1st April 2009 (i.e. the beginning of phase III). This review will cover the third phase of the partnership, given that at the end of the first and the second phases, self-assessments were already prepared and discussed between IOE and SDC. The consultant will also look at these self-assessments and reflect on them in his/her overall assessment of the partnership.

B. Objectives of the review

4. The review will have 2 objectives as follows:
 - a. Assess the results of the partnership as well as the opportunities and challenges in its implementation; and
 - b. Generate findings and recommendations (specific and generic) that could inform possible new partnerships between SDC and IFAD in the future.

C. Key questions

5. The following are some of the key questions/issues that will be covered by the review:

- a. To what extent has the partnership achieved its objectives?
- b. Assess the implementation arrangements of the partnership
- c. Review the communication and exchange of information between SDC and IOE around key activities financed under the partnership.
- d. Review and comment on the annual partnership meetings including the corresponding reporting arrangements. In this regard, also assess the usefulness of additional ad hoc meetings on specific themes organised at IFAD or SDC.
- e. Determine the financial progress of the partnership. A thorough look at the kind and range of expenditures incurred is needed as well as cost-efficiency and effectiveness of the partnership
- f. What are the main lessons from the implementation of the partnership?

D. Evaluation Process and resource requirements

- 6. An independent consultant will be recruited by IOE in consultation with SDC for undertaking the review. The consultant will be financed by part of the 2012 allocation of the partnership. S/he will conduct a desk review of the available partnership documents (partnership agreement, concept note, annual progress reports, etc.), interview (SDC and IFAD staff) and draft a short report to be discussed by SDC and IOE.

E. Timeline

- 7. The proposed timeline of the review is as follows:
 - a. February: Draft TOR to SDC
 - b. End of February: Consultant recruited
 - c. March: Consultant to undertake desk review
 - d. April – May: Consultant to undertake interviews in Rome and in Bern. Telephone interviews/email exchanges with selected SDC staff outside Bern.
 - e. May: Draft report to IFAD and SDC
 - f. June: Comments from IFAD and SDC and Consultant to finalize the report

F. Focal points for the review

- 8. The two focal points from SDC and IOE for the review are:
 - a. SDC: Mr. Alexandre Ghélew, Programme Officer, Global Programme Food Security, Global Cooperation Domain, SDC
 - b. IOE: Ms. Oanh Nguyen, Evaluation Research

Annex B: List of Interviewees

SDC

Michel Mordasini, Head, Directorate on Global Cooperation, Assistant Director General

Christina E. Grieder, Minister, Permanent Representation of Switzerland to FAO, WFP, and IFAD

Serge Chappatte, former Governor of IFAD

Jorg Frieden, former Governor of IFAD

Pio Wennubst, former Swiss Alternate Member on the IFAD Executive Board

Lothar Caviezel, former Swiss Alternate Member on the IFAD Executive Board

Cristoph Graf, former Director responsible for evaluation, SDC

Malte Lipczinsky, Deputy Head, Quality Assurance and Aid Effectiveness Division, Global Cooperation Department

Marylaure Crettaz, Focal Point, Agriculture and Food Security Network

Alexandre Ghelew, Programme Officer, Global Programme on Food Security Division, Global Cooperation Department

Milena Mihajlovic, Programme Officer, Directorate of Global Cooperation Department

Hanspeter Wyss, Programme Officer, Global Institutions Division, Global Cooperation Department

Alexander Widmer, Programme Officer, East Asia Division, Regional Cooperation Department

IFAD

Luciano Lavizzari, Director, IOE

Ashwani Muthoo, Deputy Director, IOE

Fabrizio Felloni, Senior Evaluation Officer, IOE

Cecile Berthaud, Evaluation Officer, IOE

Jicheng Zhang, Evaluation Research Analyst, IOE

Oanh Nguyen, Evaluation Research Analyst, IOE

Anna Benassi, Administrative Assistant, IOE

Sylvie Trochon, Resource Mobilization Office, and Focal Point for Switzerland, PRM

Federica Cerulli, Supplementary Funds Officer, PRM