

Independent Office
of Evaluation

 **LIFAD**
Investing in rural people

Country Strategy and Programme Evaluation Republic of the Philippines

Executive summary

November 2016



Executive summary

A. Background and context

1. In line with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) Evaluation Policy (2011) and as approved by the 116th session of the IFAD Executive Board in December 2015, the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) undertook the first country strategy and programme evaluation (CSPE) of the Republic of the Philippines in 2016.
2. **Scope.** The CSPE assessed the IFAD-Government partnership pursued under the country strategic opportunities paper/programmes (COSOPs) of 1999 and 2009. The evaluation covered the following areas to ultimately inform the overall assessment of the country strategy and programme performance: (i) lending portfolio (seven loans that became effective between 2003 and 2015); (ii) non-lending activities (knowledge management, policy dialogue, partnership building, and selected grants under implementation after 2010); and (iii) performance of IFAD and the Government.
3. **Objectives.** The CSPE has two main objectives: (i) to assess the results and performance of the IFAD-financed country strategy and programme; and (ii) to generate findings and recommendations for the future partnership between IFAD and the Republic of Philippines for enhanced development effectiveness and rural poverty eradication. The CSPE follows the IOE Evaluation Manual (second edition, published in 2015). The findings, lessons and recommendations from this CSPE will inform the preparation of the new COSOP scheduled for submission in 2017.
4. **CSPE process.** The CSPE was conducted in several phases. The preparatory stage involved a mission to the Philippines between 27 January and 5 February 2016 and the preparation of the CSPE approach paper. The main CSPE mission visited the Philippines from 29 March to 22 April 2016. It involved meetings in Manila, as well as field visits to eight provinces in four regions (Cordillera Administrative Region, Northern Mindanao, Western Visayas and Eastern Visayas). The project performance evaluation (PPE) mission for the Rural Microenterprise Promotion Programme (RuMEPP) conducted in January 2016 earlier covered two other regions (Caraga and SOCCSKSARGEN) in the field visits, apart from the Cordillera Administrative Region. The RuMEPP PPE findings provided inputs to the CSPE.
5. **IFAD in the Philippines.** Since 1978, IFAD has supported 15 loan-financed projects in the Philippines for a total project cost of US\$771.5 million. The total amount of IFAD lending to date is US\$241.9 million, out of which this evaluation covers seven IFAD loans in the amount of US\$153.4 million. In the earlier period, cofinancing of projects initiated by other international financial institutions used to be a main operating modality of IFAD in the Philippines, but this pattern has declined over the past decade. In its active portfolio, IFAD directly supervises all projects but one cofinanced with the Asian Development Bank. IFAD established its country presence in the Philippines in 2009.
6. IFAD has had COSOPs in 1999 and 2009. All three pipeline projects included in the 2009 COSOP have experienced a long gestation period: one approved in December 2012 (with significant implementation delays) and the other two in 2015. IFAD's Philippines portfolio has been a mixture of area-based project with multi-sectoral components based on a participatory approach, and those with wide geographical coverage and a sectoral focus. The main target group has included upland farmers, indigenous peoples, agrarian reform beneficiaries and fisher folks. Geographical coverage has been extensive between different projects. The diversity of government agency partners in the loan-financed projects is a notable point in the portfolio.

7. With the presence of development partners with large resource envelopes, IFAD financing is a very minor part in the official development assistance in the Philippines (about 5 per cent in the agriculture sector).

B. The lending portfolio

8. **Relevance.** The project objectives and thrusts have generally been well aligned with the Government and IFAD strategies. However, one programme stands out in the portfolio: Rapid Food Production Enhancement Programme (RaFPEP) was conceived in response to the 2007-2008 food price crisis and in support of the Government's Rice Self-Sufficiency Plan, with two distinct sub-projects: one for short-term seed acquisition and distribution for the first year, and the other for longer-term support for communal irrigation systems. While IFAD corporate documents emphasize its strategic role in supporting the transition from an emergency response to medium- to long-term solutions, in this case the two sub-projects were largely disconnected even if financed by one loan.
9. The target group, the needs, constraints and opportunities of different groups, and differentiated strategies for reaching them were not always clearly identified. For example, "farmers on communal irrigation systems" were treated the same way in design, without recognizing differences between land owners, tenants and sharecroppers; or in microenterprise development support, it was not clear whether the focus was to be more on the smallest or larger microenterprises or both. On the positive side, there has been a strong focus on gender mainstreaming in the projects. Even when there was little reflection on this in design (e.g. irrigation sub-project under RaFPEP, RuMEPP), the proposed project activities have generally been highly relevant to women, demonstrating potential to contribute to their social and economic empowerment.
10. The overall thrusts of project activities are judged to be relevant to the needs of the rural poor. But in some cases there are areas of weakness in design – for example, with wrong or uncertain assumptions, under-design, complex design or lack of clarity in impact pathways. Such instances included: (i) lack of clarity in purposes and roles of different types of beneficiary groups and organizations, with some good exceptions such as irrigators' associations; (ii) support to land titling for indigenous peoples with insufficient reflection on different contexts, and coordination challenges with various agencies and legislations; and (iii) predominant focus on credit lines as a means to improve access to finance by microenterprises, overlooking the need and opportunities to enhance supply capacity of financial service providers.
11. **Effectiveness.** The achievements relative to the objectives have been most notable and visible in relation to support to irrigated agriculture, rural infrastructure, improved participation of communities in development planning and implementation and strengthening their organizations, although with varied performance for different types of organizations. The effectiveness of the group-based approach pursued under some projects (e.g. enterprise groups) for increasing livelihoods opportunities has not been proven with convincing results and evidence.
12. RuMEPP had cases of significant contribution to the development of microenterprises. However, in the absence of comprehensive and reliable data, the extent of such successes among those who were reached by the programme, as well as the acceptable attrition rate, is not known with certainty.
13. The evidence is mixed for areas such as natural resources management and improved access to markets, also given that the focus on the latter is more recent. The earlier success hailed as a pioneer initiative in previous projects on supporting land tenure security for indigenous peoples has faced challenges in the Second

Cordillera Highland Agricultural Resource Management Project (CHARMP2), with little achievement in this regard against the set objectives and targets.

14. Overall, an analysis of data on the number of beneficiaries or outreach has proved to be challenging. There are inconsistencies in the figures between different reports due to a number of factors, including: (i) double-counting of the same beneficiaries under different activities; (ii) difficulties in defining and recording direct or indirect beneficiaries; and (iii) differences in interpretation of how the number of beneficiaries should be calculated. While gender-disaggregated data are well recorded across the projects, consistent attention has not been given to differences within the overall target group.
15. **Efficiency.** There are a number of positive indications of efficiency, including relatively low proportion of project management costs compared to other countries, and overall high level of funds utilized despite initial delays. Except for one project, for which the actual project management cost was reported as 15 per cent, this figure is about 6 per cent for the other projects completed or close to completion.
16. The level of additional financing mobilization is also high: on average US\$2.66 for every dollar IFAD has invested, compared to the corporate target of US\$1.6. However, it should be noted that the project cofinanced by the Asian Development Bank with US\$100 million (Integrated Natural Resource Management Project, INREMP) pushes up the figure significantly.
17. One of the weak areas with regard to efficiency has been considerable time lags between conceptualization/inception and effectiveness. However, the timeline from loan approval to effectiveness and the first disbursement is on average comparable to the average timelines of the IFAD Asia and the Pacific Division.
18. Another weak area has been delays in disbursement and implementation, especially in initial years. INREMP has been lagging far behind in disbursement and implementation progress.
19. **Rural poverty impact.** The most significant and consistent impact across the projects is the contribution to enhancing the way government agencies and local government units (LGUs) work on rural development initiatives and how they work with the rural poor, e.g. participatory approach, in tandem with the efforts to strengthen organizations of the rural poor to effectively participate in such processes. RuMEPP contributed to an increased focus of the Department of Trade and Industry on microenterprise development and led to the launching of a number of major initiatives. In broad terms, the projects have contributed to enhanced collaboration and "convergence" among different government agencies, LGUs and non-public actors.
20. The portfolio has achieved good impact on human and social capital and empowerment, especially in terms of individual skills and capacity for economic activities, as well as empowering the communities to participate in planning, implementing and monitoring development activities, infrastructure maintenance, integration of tribal leaders in local development councils where indigenous peoples are a minority, and strengthening of irrigators' associations. Impact on the capacity of beneficiaries' organizations to engage in productive, enterprise or marketing activities seems to be mixed, also depending upon various factors.
21. The impact on agricultural productivity and food security is visible in particular from support to irrigation and but less clear from other interventions. While there are certainly cases of significant contribution to household incomes (e.g. through microenterprise development, income-generating activities), it is difficult to be conclusive on the extent and magnitude due to insufficient data.

22. **Sustainability of benefits.** For this criterion, the evaluation assesses the likely continuation of benefits that were generated by the projects beyond the phase of external funding support. The main areas for which the sustainability of benefits is assessed are: (i) collective capacity of beneficiaries and their organizations; (ii) physical infrastructure; and (iii) pro-poor institutions and approaches of partners to work with the rural poor.
23. With regard to collective capacity of beneficiaries, organizations such as irrigators' associations with a clear mandate and legal status have a high likelihood of growth and sustainability. Several factors work in favour: a clear institutional home (National Irrigation Administration, NIA), continuous supervision and support by NIA, regular incomes to support the operations and maintenance (irrigation service fees), and the centrality of irrigation systems to their livelihoods. On the other hand, the assessment of sustainability of larger and more formal community institutions and people's organizations is mixed, and that of much smaller informal groups supported by projects (e.g. self-help groups or livelihoods interest groups) is even less certain and more variable. For these smaller groups in particular, sustainability will be a challenging proposition if they do not have a fuller appreciation from the outset of the project (through the project approach and activities) of the longer-term livelihood and economic advantages that such membership can bring.
24. As for physical infrastructure, there is a very good prospect for the rehabilitated irrigation facilities to be maintained, given a growing trend of collection rates of irrigation service fees and improved institutional and governance capacity of irrigators' associations. Also for other types of public infrastructure, the likelihood of sustainability appears to be good. The positive factors include: (i) community ownership derived from the participatory process (needs identification and involvement in supervision of works); (ii) systems of fees collection where relevant (e.g. for domestic water supplies); and (iii) commitment by LGUs.
25. In general, the prospect for sustainability of pro-poor institutions and approaches supported by the projects is also favourable. In the CSPE's view, this is mainly due to the overall supportive policy, legislative and institutional framework in the country. This is also reflected in relatively high scores in the rural sector assessments conducted for IFAD's performance-based allocation system.
26. **Innovation and scaling up.** Innovation has benefitted ways of working on projects. It is worthwhile noting a couple of good examples of grant-loan interaction, where innovations which originated in regional grants have been taken up in loan-financed projects (e.g. farmer business schools, cataloguing and developing the value chain for heirloom rice varieties).
27. All innovations reported to have been scaled up or to have potential for scaling up are fairly small-scale and technical in nature and reflect what IFAD describes as "scaling up activities" rather than "scaling up results". Although the examples are fairly modest, they demonstrate effective use of project financing and knowledge management. On the other hand, linkage of innovations, scaling-up and policy dialogue or engagement has been less effective.
28. **Gender equality and women's empowerment.** There have been visible efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment at the project level, resulting in notable achievements. This was the case even where the design documents were weak on gender issues (e.g. RuMEPP) and despite the fact that the situation of women in the Philippines is considered to be better than many other countries. The country programme as a whole has also been effective in highlighting the importance of gender issues through the IFAD Philippines Gender Network. In addition, as observed from the CSPE's field visits, many staff of project offices, main government agencies in the field and local government units are women.

29. The projects generally provided men and women with opportunities to participate in and benefit from economic activities. Women were in the majority in many groups and among microenterprises supported. For new female microentrepreneurs (start-ups) who had no or little stable income-generating opportunities, their participation in the project provided them with new or better sources of incomes.
30. Women's participation in decision-making processes in different fora has improved, whether membership organizations or community gatherings, due to a combination of encouragement of more participation, exposure and awareness raising, and better knowledge and skills. In CHARMP2, the proportion of women in leadership positions is reported to range between 45 and 50 per cent in different types of groups. Even in irrigators' associations, which used to be considered more as men's domain, along with increasing membership of women, there has been a notable increase in women in leadership positions: 32 per cent reported under the RaFPEP irrigation sub-project, surpassing the target of 30 per cent.
31. While no comprehensive data are available, women's increased involvement in productive activities has not brought up a concern about excessive workload for them. Indeed, women tend to be satisfied with improved opportunities to spend their time on income-generating activities, and it is reported that their husbands are generally supportive of the business activities of the wives and that they may also provide labour.
32. **Environment and natural resources management.** Among the four projects completed or at an advanced stage of implementation, two projects had a particularly strong focus on natural resources management: Northern Mindanao Community Initiative and Resource Management Project (NMCIREMP) and CHARMP2. According to the earlier project performance assessment on NMCIREMP, there were a number of achievements (e.g. improved management of natural resources for Lake Mainit), but more could have been done had activities related to natural resource management been initiated earlier in the project. On the other hand, under CHARMP2, while activities in reforestation and agro-forestry have progressed well in terms of planting activities, concrete benefits for households and communities from these are still to be realized.
33. **Adaptation to climate change.** The dimension of climate change adaptation was not explicitly identified in earlier projects, also because IFAD developed a Climate Change Strategy in 2010. Nonetheless, a number of activities undertaken are relevant. Such activities have included training and capacity building of farmers on sustainable natural resources management practices, including soil and water conservation techniques, crop rotation and disaster risk reduction. There have also been cases of adapting the design of some rural infrastructure for stronger resilience.

C. Non-lending activities

34. **Knowledge management.** Knowledge management was well set out as an integrated part of the Philippines country programme. Various platforms have been instituted under the country programme. First, Annual Country Programme Review meetings, with representatives of active loans and selected grants, government departmental staff and IFAD staff, have helped reflect on and improve implementation and share lessons among loan and grant projects. Second, Knowledge and Learning Marketplaces are annual, two-day public events that bring together stakeholders of the IFAD country programme in the Philippines and the general public and showcase the activities, accomplishments and products of IFAD-supported projects and assisted communities. Third, the IFAD Philippines Gender Network is a network of gender focal points from IFAD-funded projects, civil society organizations, and implementing agencies. The network was created mainly to provide a forum where gender focal points discuss and analyse gender issues and formulate recommendations.

35. All of these have contributed to experience sharing and cross fertilization. There have been cases of good linkages between the grant- and loan-financed projects, with the former generating experience and knowledge which have been taken up by the latter and have contributed to improving the effectiveness of the projects. The role of the country office in facilitating these and other knowledge management initiatives has been crucial. However, the main missing element has been a way of channelling findings to help inform policy discussions.
36. **Policy dialogue.** The original objectives for policy dialogue set by IFAD in the 2009 COSOP were overambitious, both in terms of the scope and envisaged approach and process, and relied too much on the expectation that issues emerging from the Annual Country Programme Reviews and the Knowledge and Learning Markets would be channelled into a higher-level dialogue. In the absence of a regular national forum, IFAD needed to identify or promote opportunities for wider or structured dialogue. The only example of this was the 2012 policy forum on food security. Without a routine mechanism, the policy linkage objectives in the COSOP were unrealistic.
37. The programme has successfully brought forward lessons from implementation experience in projects, which the knowledge management process was effective at disseminating. They were useful but largely reflect tools, techniques and activities rather than results and lessons with implications on broader strategic and policy issues.
38. **Partnership building.** The country programme has established extensive partnerships with a large number of government line departments and oversight agencies (in particular, the National Economic and Development Authority, NEDA, but also with the Department of Finance and the Department of Budget Management). The projects have tended to work through LGU. They have also contributed to strengthening the collaboration among many government line departments in support of the National Convergence Initiative.
39. Partnerships with civil society organizations have also been generally good, in particular through grants, Annual Country Programme Reviews and the Knowledge and Learning Market events.
40. On the other hand, partnerships with other bilateral and multilateral development agencies have been fewer than planned in the COSOP, and little has materialized with the private sector.
41. **Grants.** Since 2007, IFAD has financed 27 grants which covered the Philippines with a value of US\$28.66 million. Of these, two were grants directly co-financing loans; six were country specific grants, including one grant of an exceptionally high amount (US\$4 million) for rehabilitation after typhoon Haiyan; and 19 were global or regional grants which covered multiple countries including the Philippines. Three country-specific grants and three regional grants were reviewed in more detail in the CSPE.
42. Good linkages were developed between two of the three regional grants reviewed and the loan projects, arising from interaction at knowledge management platforms and events described earlier. The small country-specific grant to support results-based monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of government project implementing partners contributed to the emergence of a new national results-based M&E system developed between NEDA and the Department of Budget Management. On the other hand, the grant in response to Haiyan was not efficient nor efficient in providing short-term and emergency response: although the grant was processed quickly, implementation was significantly delayed due to a combination of slow procurement and disruption to government services following the typhoon. Questions are also raised on the alignment of the grant with the IFAD policy on grant financing, or with the principle contained in the IFAD Guidelines for

Disaster Early Recovery that synergies with other agencies and specialized (relief) organizations should be maximized and duplication of efforts avoided.

D. Performance of partners

43. **IFAD.** IFAD has been particularly strong with regard to actively supporting non-lending activities, facilitating grant-loan linkages, networking with government agencies and project partners, and direct supervision and implementation support. For these achievements, the IFAD country office and the role of the country programme officer have been instrumental. IFAD has effectively taken up the responsibilities for direct supervision and implementation support.
44. On the other side, there were a number of shortcomings, including the failure to develop coherent and useful strategic guidance for the country programme (COSOP). The 2009 COSOP was aligned with key policy and strategic frameworks and built on previous experiences to a fair degree. But the COSOP strategic objectives were narrowly focused on projects with little added value over and above individual loans, and the approach to targeting was not well thought through, mainly driven by geographical targeting of the "20 poorest provinces", which was in fact not practical since the list changed from year to year and the poverty assessment have a high degree of statistical error. Other shortcomings included some design weaknesses, inadequate attention to supporting project M&E, and questions on its response to emergency situation.
45. **Government.** A diverse range of government agencies and LGUs have been involved in the country programme and they have mostly proved to be valuable partners. The participation of NEDA in all supervision missions is an exemplary practice, indicating strong ownership by the Government. The availability of counterpart funding has been generally good, except for the challenges faced by LGUs to secure required counterpart funding for infrastructure sub-projects, which was initially at a higher percentage. The key challenge in the country programme has been the lengthy review process for new project proposals.

E. Conclusions

46. The country programme presents a contrasting tale of innovation and delay; process has prevailed over progress. The country presence enabled close follow-up on the country programme and excellent networking with partners in certain areas, which brought success to knowledge management. The attention to the value added beyond financing investment projects has become even more relevant as IFAD seeks to find ways to engage with middle-income countries such as the Philippines. But substantial delays in both implementation and the entry of new projects to the portfolio, combined with poor understanding about project results, diminished the learning to be fed into policy engagement processes and scaling-up from IFAD's support.
47. The country programme was a good fit with national plans and IFAD's strategic frameworks. But project design details did not always match strategic intentions. Targeting relied heavily on the Government's list of "the poorest provinces", an aim that was in fact not practicable. Selection or monitoring of targeted beneficiaries lacked clarity. A number of projects have relied on working through beneficiaries' groups, but the roles and potential of such groups, for example, as an organizing conduit or to sustain a viable enterprise, were not always clear, with the exception of irrigators' associations. Widely spread geographical coverage, a multitude of activities and the low intensity of investment create potential challenges to demonstrate how poverty can be alleviated and generate lessons for policy and scaling up.
48. There are a range of noteworthy and visible achievements in some areas, albeit with long gestation periods, delayed implementation and imperfect or poor evidence about their contribution to outcomes. Highlights include support to

irrigated agriculture, rural infrastructure, participation of communities in development planning and implementation and strengthening their organizations, greater involvement of indigenous peoples in local governance, and, to a lesser extent, microenterprise development.

49. Strengths of the country programme are evident particularly in the performance of knowledge management, collaboration between the loans and the grants, the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, the projects' support to empowerment of beneficiaries and their organizations, support to "convergence" and collaboration of different initiatives and government partners.
50. In general, non-lending activities played to the strengths in Philippines society. Close interaction and sharing of implementation experiences reflect a relatively strong civil society sector, good communications and well-educated middle managers. The presence and role of the IFAD county office has been instrumental in facilitating these activities. But the original objectives for policy dialogue were overambitious, and policy discussions were more about tools and techniques than higher-level strategic issues. There was insufficient engagement with other multilateral or bilateral agencies and little leverage over government systems. IFAD emerges as a small but trusted implementation partner for the Government, but not an animated advocate for a middle-income country.
51. Both monitoring and evaluation have under-performed at the project level. Monitoring has generated data about implementation, but in many projects there are inconsistencies even over basic information such as number of beneficiaries. Evaluation studies have failed to deliver reliable findings about outcomes. Reports display a mixture of poor conceptualization, weak or inappropriate survey designs and inattention by management to fundamental issues such as incomes, equity and food security. Opportunities have been missed to use participatory planning as baseline data and to develop case studies of complex issues such as livelihood group experiences and natural resources management. More substantive findings could have changed the nature and scope of IFAD's policy engagement with higher levels of Government and other development partners.

F. Recommendations

52. Provided below are key recommendations for consideration by IFAD and the Government of the Philippines. All these recommendations are to be considered in relation to the following contextual issues: the new Government in place as of July 2016 and its emerging new policy direction; the country's status as a middle-income country; the post-conflict situation in Mindanao; and the country's exposure to disaster risks.
53. **Recommendation 1: Carefully reflect on IFAD's comparative advantage relative to the country's needs in the new country strategy.** The process for strategy development should take into consideration the following: (i) the country is not particularly in need of external financing, but rather looks for knowledge; and (ii) in the presence of other partners with larger resource envelopes for the agriculture and rural sector, it is important to identify and agree on strategic issues and areas where IFAD's support and expertise could add value. The new country strategy should reflect IFAD's specificity and comparative advantage, in terms of the target group (e.g. indigenous peoples, fisher folks) and/or thematic areas with a clear pro-poor orientation, with a view to generating knowledge and lessons to inform investments by the Government and other partners for scaling-up.
54. In terms of engagement with indigenous peoples, and taking into consideration earlier achievements and prevailing institutional challenges, there is an opportunity to revisit and strategically reflect on future support. Land tenure remains a potential source of conflict, and the new strategy may need to consider ways to revitalize support to land titling. Furthermore, given the exposure of the country

and the rural poor to natural disasters, the country strategy should include a vulnerability and risk assessment and a disaster preparedness country brief, relative to its strategic objectives and foreseen support.

55. The IFAD model of learning from project results and using information to support government policy should be an explicit element of the strategy. The strategy should discuss the opportunities for diverse types of support apart from investment financing, for example, reimbursable technical assistance and facilitating knowledge-sharing with other countries.
56. **Recommendation 2: Enhance diagnostic analysis of the potential target group and targeting.** The new COSOP will be partly defined by the delayed entries to the portfolio of CONVERGE and FishCORAL. Within their target locations there is scope to improve the identification of potential beneficiaries and how to reach them. First, there should be good-quality diagnosis of different groups within the potential target population, a differentiated approach to reach them, and monitoring of the outreach, beneficiary profiles and the targeting performance. Issues of food security and equity should be more strongly built into targeting. Second, a more strategic approach to increase intensity of investment (either under a specific project or by creating synergies between projects) in targeted locations should be pursued, to enhance the likelihoods of palpable impact.
57. **Recommendation 3: Strengthen leverage for policy engagement by improving the quality of knowledge and evidence.** Building on generally good performance in knowledge management, an implementation strategy should be developed to improve the quality of evidence from M&E across the portfolio as a whole. This could include working more closely with NEDA and the Department of Budget Management in support of the national results-based M&E initiative, and supporting M&E by the implementing line departments as well as LGUs and other stakeholders at local level. Project designs should be accompanied by clear theories of change and should plan for analytical work and evaluations. Consideration could be given to identifying and working with an organization to manage M&E and learning across the portfolio and bring consistency and rigour to evaluation design.
58. The established knowledge management platforms and processes should bring in other development partners and commission comparative analysis of implementation issues and performance beyond IFAD-supported projects. In addition, the IFAD country office should be resourced to increase support to national policy and strategy issues.
59. **Recommendation 4. Strengthen partnerships with other development partners to support the new Government.** Good performance to date in working with government agencies, research organizations and civil society should be consolidated and expanded to other development partners. Relationships with some of the grant recipients with clear potential for value addition and linkage should be brought into the mainstream of the country strategy and programme.
60. Closer links can be established with multilateral and bilateral agencies. This does not necessarily have to be in the form of cofinancing, also given the Government's recent policy on reviewing project proposals separately from possible financing sources. Working through the country office, IFAD should work with other development partners in the rural sector to establish a regular exchange of information with the Government, and with a focus on the areas of its comparative advantage and the Government's priorities. There are also opportunities for IFAD to work with other Rome-based agencies to provide advisory support on issues such as food production and food security, gender equality and women's empowerment in agriculture and rural development, and contingency planning for disaster risk reduction. Opportunities should be sought to develop schemes with the private sector to help support value chain investments by farmers.