

# insights



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## THE PHILIPPINES COUNTRY STRATEGY AND PROGRAMME EVALUATION

# Knowledge management stimulates innovation and bridges the gap between grants and loan projects

**The 2016 Philippines Country Strategy and Programme Evaluation identified knowledge management as a central feature of IFAD's support, describing the country strategy as a knowledge-driven partnership. Knowledge management is an important part of IFAD's way of working, as reflected in its Knowledge Management Strategy. For the Philippines, knowledge management received prominent attention in IFAD's 2009 country strategy, as an element of IFAD's comparative advantage and as a cross-cutting issue.**

Knowledge management was well set out as an integrated part of the country programme. It was also appropriately resourced and inclusive. There were clear objectives, and structured mechanisms, which IFAD used effectively. Annual country programme reviews and "Knowledge and Learning Markets" proved popular with implementers as a means of sharing experience and enabled cross-fertilization of ideas.

The experience in the Philippines is instructive and should inform the design in other settings.

## A structure for knowledge management

Knowledge management features in all country strategies, but in the Philippines a number of supportive and related

factors worked together to make this a core feature. Firstly, the loans programme had several innovative elements, for which policy dialogue was identified to be important; secondly, that dialogue was to be promoted through a series of participatory processes; thirdly, the period covered by this review coincided with a shift to direct supervision and the establishment of an in-country office, with the appointment of a country programme management facilitator/knowledge management officer (a title that was later simplified to Country Programme Officer - CPO).

With a CPO in place and a clear mandate, knowledge management developed three distinct but supportive strands: annual country portfolio reviews (ACPoRs) by staff from loan and grant projects, together with representatives of partner government departments and agencies; annual two-day Knowledge and Learning Markets, stimulated at

first by a regional programme, Knowledge Networking for Rural Development in Asia/Pacific Region, that bring together non-governmental organizations, the private sector, research institutions, government, project staff and the general public and are hosted by a different one of these groups each year; and the IFAD Philippines Gender Network of project gender focal points, civil society organizations and implementing agencies.

## Results

The ACPoR meetings ensured a regular and rigorous review of the portfolio, comparing performance across projects and making good use of analysis by independent national consultants. The knowledge management activities provided a platform for wider policy discussion and are credited with cross-fertilization of ideas across grants and loan projects. Specifically, discussions at the meetings contributed to the redesign of a credit programme in the Cordillera into the Livelihood Assistance Fund patterned after the Poverty Alleviation Fund of Northern Mindanao, and gave rise to the decision to fund a study to reform cost sharing arrangements between national and local government that were holding back infrastructure development. A model mechanism for supervision at community level that started as Community-based Operation & Maintenance Monitoring and Evaluation Teams in Northern Mindanao has been adapted as Barangay Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Teams in the Cordillera Highlands project.

The joint forum for grants and loan projects enabled linkages to be formed over and above expectations, and with a number of innovations, including: introducing Farmer Business Schools, using experience from the FoodSTART project with the International Potato Centre (known by its Spanish acronym CIP); cataloguing and developing the value chain for heirloom rice varieties in the Cordillera region by the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) project on rice in unfavourable environments; and introducing payments for environmental services by the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF). Five of the nine Knowledge and Learning Markets to date have been hosted by non-governmental organizations, with themes that ranged from community initiatives, to gender and youth, to resilient family farming. This demonstrates a level of engagement that is broader than IFAD's portfolio of projects and has created a community of interest around IFAD's support.

## Lessons

The experience in the Philippines highlights positive lessons and some challenges to make knowledge management more effective. Having in-country staff whose terms of reference clearly included knowledge management and a clear direction was important. Annual reviews were always strongly supported by IFAD headquarters in Rome and included representatives from government departments and agencies. Knowledge events provided a platform for civil society organizations alongside project and government entities. This built on the strong tradition of "people power" in the Philippines and gave rise to some notable results, including a set of eleven policy briefs stimulated by the International Year of Family Farming.

Not everything lived up to the expectations of the 2009 country strategy. Lessons from implementation had clear policy implications, but they largely reflect tools and techniques – evidence about activities rather than development results and higher-level strategic issues. Project arrangements for monitoring and evaluation failed to deliver messages about poverty reduction and implementation effectiveness. The lessons from the projects provide potential leverage for IFAD to engage with the Government on the design and implementation of relevant rural and agricultural development initiatives. But there was no obvious link between discussions in these knowledge forums and interaction over sectoral policy issues. Few senior government officials participated in the knowledge management events and neither were there participants from partner development organizations. The challenge going forward is to find a way to communicate findings and guidance from contacts at project level, into concepts that resonate with policymakers.

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### Further information:

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