

## Project Completion Report Validation

**Name of programme:** Northern Region Poverty Reduction Programme (NORPREP)

**Republic of Ghana**

**Date of validation by IOE:** May 2014

### I. Basic project data

			Approval (US\$ m)		Actual (US\$ m)	
Region	WCA	Total project costs	59.6			
Country	Republic of Ghana	IFAD loan and percentage of total	12.3	20.6%	12.3	
Loan number	571	Borrower	5.7	9.6%		
Type of project (subsector)	Rural development	Cofinancier 1 (common fund and other donors)	38.2	64.1%		
Financing type	Loan	Cofinancier 2				
Lending terms <sup>a</sup>	Highly concessional	Cofinancier 3				
Date of approval	6 December 2001	Cofinancier 4				
Date of loan signature	7 February 2003	Beneficiaries	3.3	5.5		
Date of effectiveness	30 January 2004	Other sources (SOF grant)	0.06	0.2%	0.06	
Loan amendments	28 May 2009	Number of beneficiaries	114,600 direct 165,000 indirect			
Loan closure extensions	1					
Country programme managers	Ulac Demirag (current) <sup>b</sup>	Loan closing date	30 September 2010		31 March 2012	
Regional director(s)	Ides de Willebois (current) <sup>c</sup>	Mid-term review			13 March 2009	
Project completion report reviewer	Consultant, Ernst Schaltegger	IFAD loan disbursement at project completion (%)			100%	
Project completion report quality control panel	Mark Keating	Date of the project completion report			March 2012	

Source: PCR, March 2012.

<sup>a</sup> There are four types of lending terms: (i) special loans on highly concessional terms, free of interest but bearing a service charge of three fourths of one per cent (0.75%) per annum and having a maturity period of 40 years, including a grace period of 10 years; (ii) loans on hardened terms, bearing a service charge of three fourths of one per cent (0.75%) per annum and having a maturity period of 20 years, including a grace period of 10 years; (iii) loans on intermediate terms, with a rate of interest per annum equivalent to 50% of the variable reference interest rate and a maturity period of 20 years, including a grace period of 5 years; (iv) loans on ordinary terms, with a rate of interest per annum equivalent to one hundred per cent (100%) of the variable reference interest rate, and a maturity period of 15-18 years, including a grace period of three years.

<sup>b</sup> M. Beavogui from 18/05/2009 to 19/01/2010; M. Manssouri from 19/06/2000 to 18/05/2009; P. Saint Ange from 01/03/2000 to 19/06/2000.

<sup>c</sup> Mr Beavogui from 01/02/2001 to 31/10/2011.

## II. Programme outline

1. NORPREP was approved in December 2001 and became effective in January 2004 after an effectiveness lag of 26 months. The programme goal was to improve the livelihoods and living conditions of poor rural communities, with emphasis on women and other vulnerable groups, through deepening and broadening rural development services and community and individual self-help capacity. The specific objectives were to:
  - build the capacity of decentralized local government, civil-society and community organizations to better respond to the needs of the poorest strata of the rural population;
  - improve the access of the rural population, especially women, to resources and services; and
  - introduce the operational changes and reforms needed to enhance the efficiency and sustainability of institutions and community service providers in the Northern Region<sup>1</sup>.
2. The programme area encompassed 13 districts covering more than 70 000 km<sup>2</sup>, or about 30% of the country. Some 115,000 households were deemed to be direct beneficiaries, and 165,000 indirect. The programme approach was to sensitize all administrative levels to the programme objectives, to launch training of trainers for bottom-up participatory planning, to facilitate the formulation of community action plans (CAPs), consolidate them into area council and district level action plans and finally to finance some of the community sub-projects deriving from the CAPs. The participatory planning targeted the poorest communities in the poorest Area Councils<sup>2</sup>.
3. The programme had two components: (i) operational support and capacity-building and (ii) the Community Development Fund (CDF). Programme management on all administrative levels was mainstreamed into the decentralized structures of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD). Responsibility for hands-on programme management and oversight of both components was entrusted to the Regional Planning Coordinating Unit (RPCU). There was no Programme Management Unit (PMU), only a 4-person Programme Support Team (PST). As a consequence, programme implementation at regional level was sluggish, with knock-on effects at district level. The result was low disbursement and repeated failure to achieve targets. Programme restructuring began in early 2007 and took 18 months to complete (more details on this turn-around are given in Paragraphs 32-33).

## III. Review of findings

### A. Programme performance

#### Relevance

4. The PCR states that the basic goal of NORPREP was highly aligned with the poverty reduction objectives of IFAD and the Government, because NORPREP targeted the very poor in one of the poorest regions of the country, focusing on basic infrastructure. At programme completion, the goal was deemed to be still relevant to the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy *because the gap between North and South of Ghana continued to widen*. At the time of programme appraisal, area-based targeted multi-sectorial development in the North was fully in line with the IFAD country strategy (COSOP).

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<sup>1</sup> IFAD. Report and Recommendation of the President to the Executive Board on a Proposed Loan to the Republic of Ghana for the Northern Region Poverty Reduction Programme, Rome, 6 December 2001.

<sup>2</sup> IFAD. Ghana, Northern Region Poverty Reduction Programme (IFAD Loan 571-GH), Project Completion Report (PCR), Rome, March 2012.

5. It may be indicated, in relation with this reference to the IFAD country strategy, to distinguish between the 1998<sup>3</sup> and the 2006<sup>4</sup> COSOPs. While the former only mentions the intention of continuing to concentrate on rural poverty in the Upper East, Upper West or the Northern Regions, the latter explicitly confirms that *"it is therefore crucial to address rural poverty in the northern regions of Ghana with a special focus on women"*. Even the 2012 COSOP, which was published after NORPREPs completion, refers to the Country Programme Evaluation (CPE) recommendation, i.e. that *"a careful balance will be sought between supporting sector-wide intervention at the national level – to drive broader institutional reform – and geographical targeting of rural poverty. Special attention will be given to the northern part of the country"*<sup>5</sup>.
6. While the coherence of objectives, in particular the pro-poor orientation, of the programme was and remained intact over programme life, the PCR is critical about design coherence, stating that *"NORPREP design was too complex for the capacity and competences of the small programme support team. It was correct for the participatory needs assessment process at community level to identify all types of needs, but it should not have attempted to address all needs in a single programme"*. Evidently, NORPREP disregarded a key design principle, i.e. *"analyse systemically, implement selectively"*. The logframe at appraisal is indicative of the lack of selective focus as it contains 71 indicators, none of them quantified and time-bound. According to the PCR, there was also a mismatch between the definition of the target group – mainly women and vulnerable groups – and the emphasis on financing public infrastructure such as boreholes and schools, which are designed to serve entire community without regards for sex or age or social status. On the other hand, and as PMD comments infer, the programme was implemented though the CDD approach, by which the various groups were involved in the prioritization and selection of the public infrastructure investments – boreholes and schools are much a concern of women and vulnerable groups, and also other infrastructures responding to very specific needs have been included.
7. The mid-term review (MTR) of 2009<sup>6</sup> noted that it proved unrealistic to expect 80 percent funding from other sources. This led to adjustments in strategy and reduction in intended support. Overall, the stringency of pro-poor objectives was substantially compromised by the above mentioned design inconsistencies, which is also an expression of a lack of attention to sustainability in design. Relevance is rated as *moderately unsatisfactory (3)*.

### **Effectiveness**

8. Considering the fact that the indicators in the appraisal logframe did not set verifiable targets, the PCR is remarkably clear and evidence-based with regard to what extent the objectives on NORPREP have been achieved. In the PCR mission's view, NORPREP largely achieved its objective of *"deepening and broadening rural development services and community and individual self-help capacity, by (a) building the capacity of decentralized local government, civil society and community organizations to better respond to the needs of the poorest strata of the rural population; (b) improving access to resources and services by the large rural population, especially women; and (c) introducing operational changes and reforms needed to enhance the efficiency and sustainability of the institutions and community service providers in the Northern Region."* The PCR concludes that there is clear evidence that the programme improved access to resources and services by the wider rural population.

<sup>3</sup> IFAD. Republic of Ghana, Country Strategic Opportunities Paper (COSOP), Rome, July 1998.

<sup>4</sup> IFAD. Republic of Ghana, Country Strategic Opportunities Paper (COSOP), Rome, March 2006.

<sup>5</sup> IFAD. Republic of Ghana, Country Strategic Opportunities Paper (COSOP), Rome, December 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Republic of Ghana, Northern Region Poverty Reduction Programme (NORPREP), IFAD Loan No. 571-GH, Draft Mid-Term Review Report, Accra, May 2009.

9. The PCR reports, over full five pages, facts and figures regarding the achievement of objectives in detail. Despite some reservations on the veracity of data, e.g. the number of cattle served by livestock drinking water supply, the systematic comparison between targets and achieved magnitudes was possible only thanks to stringent target setting at MTR. This constituted a distinct departure from the non-committal and superficial definition of indicators in the appraisal logframe (see Paragraph 6).
10. Numerous highlights of the above achievements are given in the PCR. Approximately 239 communities with a population of 150,507 have benefited from the educational infrastructure. As a result of the programme, 95 percent of the population, on average, has gained access to a potable water source, and 37 of the communities have 100 percent access. Potable water is accessible to approximately 77,534 out of 91,711 people (85 percent) in guinea worm endemic areas as of 31 August 2011. The two clinics and a bone-setter facility provided services to approximately 5,839 people. Nine nurses' quarters extend accommodation for 25 health staff and their households. The traditional bone-setter clinic serves at least 2,500 people a year. Nurses' quarters facilitate 24-hour access to health service and quicker response of health staff to needs of patients at non-official working hours. On the other hand, the PCR is critical about the veracity of the figures provided regarding domestic use, animal watering and irrigation from dams and dugouts as they lack plausibility and partly contradict direct observations.
11. No data have been gathered on production of vegetables or rice in the dam-irrigated area or on rain-fed upland crops in the without-project situation. Since none of the farmers grew dry season vegetables at the baseline, a 20 percent increase is plausible. Ten feeder roads of approximately 131.8 km length were improved. Six of these roads, which were previously not motor able, have been made motor able, and 48 communities were provided with such roads. More than 15,284 persons (in 2010) benefitted from the roads. In view of the above, the PCR rates effectiveness as *moderately satisfactory* (4).

### **Efficiency**

12. The Project Completion Digest<sup>7</sup> reports that the IFAD loan disbursement rate was only 2 percent in 2006, and 30 percent in 2009 at the time of the MTR, as a consequence of programme design flaws as mentioned in Paragraphs 3 and 6. Such initial delays depress efficiency substantially and led to a disbursement profile whereby 47 of the IFAD loan was disbursed in the last 18 months, which also was the result of a loan closure extension.
13. In accordance with the PCR, total actual direct beneficiaries were equivalent to around 10 percent of the rural population, which was in line with estimated beneficiary numbers for IFAD-financed part of the original USD 60 million programme. The actual cost per direct beneficiary of NORPREP was USD 105 per individual and the cost per household was USD 524, which is in line with appraisal expectations and reasonable by IFAD standards. The PCR further indicates that sanitation sub-projects had the lowest cost-per-beneficiary (USD 40), followed by health (USD 80), roads (USD 100), and drinking water (USD 140). The cost of education facilities at USD 350 per pupil and the cost of post-harvest facilities at USD 368 per user were acceptable.
14. However, the PCR assesses the high cost per hectare of dams constructed under NORPREP as a cause for concern. Although the design established a ceiling of USD 10,000 per hectare, the average per ha costs of all dams constructed by NORPREP oscillated between USD 13,000 and 34,000. These are expensive irrigation facilities for "food security". Africa has mostly examples of failed irrigation schemes, where subsistence objectives without market analyses and business plans have been

<sup>7</sup> IFAD. Ghana: Northern Region Poverty Reduction Programme, Project Completion Digest, Rome, 2012.

implemented. Training water user associations on organizational matters etc. is not enough. The average unit cost for spot rehabilitation of feeder roads is also in excess of the appraisal ceiling of USD 10,000 per km. Average unit costs of NORPREP subprojects were similar to those of CBRDP, but NORPREP's cost-efficiency was lower than of the World Bank funded Community-based Rural Development Project (CBRDP) due to frequent time overruns on contracts stemming mainly from cash flow difficulties that led to delayed payment for certified work progress.

15. No financial and economic analysis was done at appraisal on the grounds that the programme was demand-driven, and therefore its outputs and benefits could not be quantified ex-ante. The PCR however attempted to piggyback the NORPREP financial and economic analysis on the analytical models developed by other closely related projects, such as CBRDP. The CBRDP ICR, which was completed in mid-2011, conducted a financial and economic analysis based on three project activities, two of which are relevant to NORPREP: one for a typical school, and one for a community health facility. Both models show that the investments in schools and health care facilities under CBRDP were financially and economically justified. The NORPREP PCR concludes that, by extension, the same conclusions are likely to apply to the schools and health facilities financed by NORPREP.
16. On the whole, the assessment of efficiency displays mixed results. A serious handicap is, as in many other IFAD funded operations, the dismal initial performance of the programme over many years. Despite the resolute turn-around after the MTR, this performance pattern weighs heavily on efficiency. The absence on production and productivity data as well as of financial and economic analyses further makes the assessment of efficiency unrewarding. Thus, the PCR rates efficiency as *moderately unsatisfactory* (3).

## **B. Rural poverty impact**

17. **Household income and assets.** Information in the PCR on household income and changes over programme life is absent. In terms of household assets, the PCR only states that *"the asset index of households improved, which led the results and impact measuring system (RIMS) survey to conclude that there may be reduction in the poverty levels; the degree or proportion of change is not ascertained here and attribution to the NORPREP programme is not definite, although the programme's contribution cannot be ignored."* Consequently, PMD in the Project Completion Digest refrains to rate this impact domain, and so does the PCR.
18. **Human and social capital and empowerment.** The PCR does not address this impact domain specifically and explicitly. Regarding the formation *human capital*, it notes that *the percentage of adult women who could read and write increased from 11 percent to 14 percent and in the age group 15-24 years, it increased from 22 percent to 27 percent. NORPREP has contributed to the improvement in female literacy rates by increasing girls' school enrolment and attendance at the 122 NORPREP-financed education facilities.*
19. The PCR Digest, and implicitly the PCR itself, infer that the social capital of beneficiaries has been strengthened, with an improved capacity of communities to identify and prioritize their needs, implement community subprojects and operate/maintain the facilities. The programme has trained and supported the capacity of users to operate and maintain the structures and facilities — building a sense of self image and self-reliance that has the ripple effect of greater social cohesion in the local community. The capacity of district-level staff has been also enhanced in the areas of participatory planning, procurement, disbursement and financial management. However, the MTR and the last three Project Status Reports (PSRs; see Paragraph 26) are cautious about the sufficiency of the above mentioned training efforts. In contrast with PMD, the PCR thus rates this impact domain only as *moderately satisfactory* (4).

20. **Food security and agricultural productivity.** The PCR, confirmed by the Project Completion Digest, acknowledges that NORPREP did not compile and keep any meaningful records on agricultural productivity. There is however a reference to food security, but the source is not indicated. Accordingly, chronic malnutrition in children aged below 5 declined from 35 to 28 percent. As the PCR notes, this achievement cannot be attributed exclusively to NORPREP, although it is known that access to improved drinking water contributes to improved nutritional status of children under 5 by reducing diseases like diarrhoea and guinea worm that interfere with food assimilation. The percentage of households experiencing a hungry season decreased from 87 percent in 2005 to 61 percent in 2011. With this information at hand, the impact domain of food security alone can be cautiously rated as *moderately satisfactory (4)*.
21. **Natural resources, the environment and climate change.** The PCR Digest notes that there is no information of NORPREP's impact on this domain. Indeed, the PCR remains silent in this regards. During programme implementation, this aspect has been somewhat forgotten while the President's Report affirms that "*environmental assessments will be institutionalized in the development of Annual Work Plans and budgets (AWP/Bs) for all activities*". This evidently did not happen. The 2012 Country Programme Evaluation (CPE)<sup>8</sup> is recommending, especially for the programme area: "*The problem of environmental degradation in Ghana is a serious one. Increasing focus and presence in the Northern and Upper West Regions implies that interventions will have to cope with a very fragile environment. This CPE recommends that an environmental assessment form part of the next COSOP*". For NORPREP, PMD refrained from rating this impact domain, and the PCRV has no additional evidence that would permit to emit a qualified statement.
22. **Institutions and policies.** According to the PCR, the NORPREP experience was instrumental in convincing the National Development Planning Committee (NDPC) to incorporate community action planning in its guidelines for decentralized planning. It is now a national policy that the preparation of district medium-term development plans should start with the participatory needs assessment and preparation of CAPs and Area Council Plans. The PCR digest remarks that NORPREP has enhanced the institutional capacity of the District Assemblies (DAs), in particular, and, in some cases, the Area Councils and Unit Committees. The participatory planning and improved governance processes have been well accepted by the participating DAs and are now being implemented even in towns not covered by the programme. Training in computer systems, procurement, and other governance procedures have also built institutional capacity, and the new processes are benefiting all district towns and villages, not just those supported by NORPREP investments. On this basis, the impact domain of institutions and policies is given a rating of *satisfactory (5)*.

## C. Other performance criteria

### Sustainability

23. The PCR proceeds to a lucid assessment of sustainability of NORPREP achievements. It assesses the sustainability of policy and operational changes such as the integration of community-level participatory planning in the decentralized planning process as likely insofar as it has been adopted by NDPC country-wide. However, actual implementation of community-level participatory planning depends on government's commitment to allocate sufficient resources to the DAs to enable them to facilitate CAP preparation as an input to every new District Mid-term Plan (DMTP), which was not deemed to be assured at the time of the PCR.

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<sup>8</sup> IFAD, IOE. Republic of Ghana, Country Programme Evaluation, Rome, May 2012.

24. Another sustainability bottleneck identified by the PCR is the maintenance of dams and water supply schemes, which is the responsibility of community user groups without outside support. Moreover, the benefits of education facilities are currently reduced by a shortage of qualified teachers. The shortage is a systemic problem affecting remote areas of the entire country.
25. The MTR and the three last Project Status Reports (PSRs)<sup>9 10 11</sup> voice similar concerns. The former finds some indications of problems with quality of works and sustainability (with education facilities) which may be associated with poor support staff oversight, related to the delays in finalizing payments, or may reflect a typical CDD challenge. The three PSRs concur and point, in all three reference years, to a distinct need of training of community water groups and the CDDs in charge of education facility maintenance. Sustainability will also depend on Districts' readiness to put aside funding for many of these infrastructures. It may be likely that soon irrigation facilities will be included in other projects for rehabilitation, so sustainability of the actual infrastructures is rather questionable, while the programme performed better on the institutional side.
26. On an overall plane, especially in view of the nationwide mainstreaming of community-level participatory planning, the PCRV rate sustainability as *moderately satisfactory* (4).

### **Innovation and scaling up**

27. In the view of the PCR, NORPREP's most important innovation was to move the decentralized planning process down to the community level as the starting point for decentralized district planning. However, NORPREP was not the only protagonist, since UNICEF and Community Initiatives for Food Security (CIFS) also promoted community-based approaches. At the time of NORPREP design, NDPC planning guidelines only called for consultations with stakeholders at the Area Council level. Thus, NORPREP's own contribution to innovation is to be relativized.
28. A recent innovation has been to organize community user groups in connection with all NORPREP-financed health facilities. This had not been done in the region and is already beginning to pay off. Both the PCR and the PCR Digest acknowledge this as an innovation. The same sources also point to NORPREP's scaling up capability: NORPREP has piloted some important innovations introduced by the Community-based Rural Development Project (CBRDP). These include Area Council level sub-projects, force account construction by community groups and the Rapid Results Initiative (RRI). Given the above, the PCRV rates innovation and scaling up as *moderately satisfactory* (4).

### **Gender equality and women's empowerment**

29. The PCR contains no specific section on gender equality and women's empowerment. Yet, it makes some explicit statements on the issue. For instance, the CDF was also expected to finance functional literacy training for women, nutrition education, sustainable agriculture, land husbandry, food security and rural enterprise development, but did not finance these activities because the demand from DAs and CAPs focused almost exclusively on infrastructure.
30. The PCR Digest sums up that the programme's design included a detailed gender strategy, which, however, was only partly implemented. The gender strategy in the design document did not entirely fit with the programme's emphasis on public

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<sup>9</sup> IFAD. Ghana, Project 1183 [571] Northern Region Poverty Reduction Programme -2010-06, PSE, Rome, 19 October 2010.

<sup>10</sup> IFAD. Ghana, Project 1183 [571] Northern Region Poverty Reduction Programme -2011-06, PSE, Rome, 5 July 2011.

<sup>11</sup> IFAD. Ghana, Project 1183 [571] Northern Region Poverty Reduction Programme -2012-06, PSE, Rome, 1 June 2012.

infrastructure and services, most of which were intended to benefit the entire population of both sexes. The elements that fit well with the overall thrust of NORPREP were implemented: integration of gender in participatory rural appraisal training; efforts to ensure that women's priorities were adequately reflected in CAPs; representation of women on WATSAN (water/ sanitation) committees, parent teacher associations (PTAs), community health committees and dam water user associations; gender disaggregation of training outputs; and targeting of a borehole, a grinding mill and a service centre for income generating activities to ultra-vulnerable women who had been accused of witchcraft and banned from their communities to a "witches camp". In connection with community infrastructure, it can be commended for financing drinking water subprojects, which benefit women more than men, and for strong emphasis on girls' school attendance in the training of PTAs at all education facilities. Both PMD and the PCRV rate this performance criterion as *moderately satisfactory* (4).

#### **D. Performance of partners**

31. **IFAD.** The PCR and PCR Digest are clear about IFAD's performance. The initial pro-poor orientation, which was maintained over programme life, is perceived as unwavering. But IFAD has been responsible for serious design flaws, above all the approval of a US\$60 million programme with only a US\$12.3 million in place, before the government was ready and before it was clear whether donor co-financing would be found. This hindered programme implementation. On the positive side, as soon as NORPREP was classified as a problem operation, IFAD sent a team to restructure the programme. IFAD is to be commended for its willingness to extend the completion date by 18 months, without which the programme would not have achieved its objectives.
32. This pattern over time, which is very common in IFAD funded operations, appears to be correlated with the performance of the cooperation institutions, first UNOPS and then the World Bank. In spite of the evident crisis faced by NORPREP, UNOPS only sent 3 supervision missions to NORPREP between the programme launch workshop in July 2004 and the supervision handing-over mission of November 2007, with an 18 month gap between May 2005 and Nov. 2006. As soon as the World Bank took over responsibility for supervision, NORPREP implementation status rapidly improved, as a result of faster withdrawal application (WA) processing, more rapid turnover of funds, cross-support from CBRDP and the involvement of several staff from the World Bank office in Accra in the supervision and implementation support process. IFAD evidently failed to take action against lacking support by UNOPS. Despite the bold adjustments advocated by the MTR, and the ensuing turnaround towards the end of project life, the PCRV rates IFAD performance as *moderately unsatisfactory* (3).
33. **Government.** According to the PCR Digest, the government failed to deliver on its promise of counterpart funding, as it only contributed US\$166,000 in 2003 as a condition for programme effectiveness and since then, no significant government financial contribution has been made to support programme implementation. During the first four years of implementation, NORPREP experienced frustrating delays with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MoFEP) in processing outgoing WAs and in authorizing the transfer of incoming funds replenished by IFAD to the programme accounts on the various levels. What made matters worse was that responsibility for day-to-day management was given to the Regional Planning Coordinating Unit (RPCU), which however was understaffed, weakly motivated, and overloaded with other tasks. This arrangement proved to be non-viable and resulted in slow implementation until the programme was restructured, and implementation responsibility was transferred to the Programme Support Team (PST). The above infers a government performance of *moderately unsatisfactory* (3).



## E. Overall programme achievements

34. The overall achievements of NORPREP sum up to a moderately satisfactory performance. The clear prop-poor orientation, the bottom-up planning processes and the ability to implement substantially CAPs, albeit only at the very end of an extended programme life, are the foundations for this assessment. Another positive point is the adoption of such planning processes on a national scale. The programme could have fared better if some key ingredients had been different. *Quality at entry* was seriously compromised by inadequate programme architecture, the failure to secure donor contributions, which turned out to be hypothetical at best, and a non-committal reference framework, i.e. a logframe with only a wish list of possible indicators.
35. *Implementation capacity* was hampered, in part as a consequence of the inadequate organisational set-up and, to probably a higher degree, a result of a conspicuous lack of oversight from the initial cooperation institution. This was compounded by the equally blatant absence of reaction by IFAD during the first half of programme life. NORPREP is, on the other hand, a showcase that turnarounds are possible but also that that restructuring takes considerable time and requires strong commitment from both the government and the financing agency. It was fortunate that the restructuring coincided with a new cooperating institution, the World Bank, and with the proactivity and the policy dialogue skills of the then CPM. The 18-month extension paid off in terms of disbursement, sub-project completion and efforts to improve sustainability of benefits.
36. A noteworthy observation by the PCR is the following: "*Mainstreaming programme management in the RCC/RPCU was not an appropriate choice given that the objective was not to provide budgetary support but to change the way that local government applied the NDPC planning guidelines from top-down to bottom-up*". Thus, there was a mismatch between the ambitions of profoundly shaping participatory planning procedures – which at the end proved to be reasonably successful – and the forms of organisation and the required human resources proposed by the programme.

## IV. Assessment of PCR quality

37. **Scope.** The NORPREP PCR is, not only in terms of scope, distinctly above average. It benefits from several, painstakingly accurate and well-made annexes that provide a robust basis of evidence. The NORPREP PCR distinguishes itself also by the fact that it has cross-references and a bibliography. It is fair to say that the PCR appears to be an extension of the stringency of the MTR. On this basis, PMD has rated PCR scope as highly satisfactory. A closer review of the PCR however reveals that several mandatory sections of a PCR do not appear. The PCRV thus rates PCR scope as *satisfactory (5)*.
38. **Quality.** PMD notes that the PCR it has benefitted from an in-depth as well rich analysis of the project's main achievements and shortcomings although it suffered from a poor monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system, which has undermined the assessment on the impact section. The PCRV concurs. Thanks to the detailed annexes, it is overwhelmingly evidence-based, in contrast with many other PCRs that mainly voice the opinions of their authors. PMD and the PCRV both rate quality as *satisfactory (5)*.
39. **Lessons.** The lessons learned are relevant and well rooted in the programme's implementation history. The reader can follow the logic of deduction throughout the PCR. The PCR chapter on lessons is three pages long and conveniently articulated into NORPREP design, community-based development and sustainability. Concerning the latter, one lesson mentioned by the PCR is that "*a CDD programme is unlikely to be sustained if it is area based, as it cannot trigger the necessary institutional reform processes at the national level. Had NORPREP*

*been an integral part of CBRDP, which covered the whole country, the policy leverage over institutionalization would have been stronger".* The chapter section of the PCR deserves a rating of *satisfactory (5)*.

40. **Candour.** The PCR authors were clearly able to keep a critical distance in all parts, including the section on performance of partners, which often reflects reluctance to question both IFAD and government performance in many settings. In this regard, NORPREP PCR is to be considered as a positive outlier. Candour is therefore rated as *satisfactory (5)*.

## **V. Final remarks**

### **Lessons learned**

41. A clear pro-poor orientation is necessary for a relevant IFAD programme, but it is not sufficient. The lack of clarity on what NORPREP was intended to achieve primarily, i.e. setting standards for new approaches or mainstreaming existing ones (Paragraph 33), had a paralysing effect in the first years of programme life.
42. Postponing clarity on fundamental aspects to the period after programme effectiveness and inception normally does not pay off. The programme has suffered initial confusion and substantial implementation delays that weighed on efficiency but – to put it bluntly - as well as on the reputation of IFAD as a reliable and professional development partner. On the other hand, NORPREP is a good example of what can be achieved if and when strong commitment and resolve replace initial implementation lethargy.

### **Issues for IOE follow-up**

43. With a growing number of PCRVs and Project Performance Assessments (PPAs) at hand, it would appear that many IFAD operations tend to underperform before MTR. This initial lag is often correlated to deficient implementation support, and probably as often, drastic turnarounds seem to be possible, thanks to resolve and strong leadership by IFAD. It is doubtful whether this conspicuous pattern can only be attributed to the inception of direct supervision by IFAD. If this trend can be confirmed or if it continues, IOE may be well advised to raise this issue with PMD because it represents a significant loss of efficiency across a majority of operations.

## Rating comparison

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>PMD rating<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>IOE rating<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>Net rating disconnect (IOE PCRV – PMD)</i>
<b>Project performance</b>			0
Relevance	3	3	0
Effectiveness	4	4	0
Efficiency	3	3	0
<b>Project performance<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Rural poverty impact</b>			
Household income and assets	n.a.		
Human and social capital and empowerment	5	4	-1
Food security and agricultural productivity	4	4	0
Natural resources, environment and climate change	n.a.		
Institutions and policies	5	5	0
<b>Rural poverty impact<sup>c</sup></b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Other performance criteria</b>	<b>4</b>		
Sustainability	4	4	
Innovation and scaling up	4	4	
Gender equality and women's empowerment	4	4	
<b>Overall project achievement<sup>d</sup></b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	
<b>Performance of partners<sup>e</sup></b>			
IFAD	3	3	
Government	3	3	
UNOPS, World Bank	4	n.a.	
<b>Average net disconnect</b>			<b>-0.1</b>

<sup>a</sup> Rating scale: 1 = highly unsatisfactory; 2 = unsatisfactory; 3 = moderately unsatisfactory; 4 = moderately satisfactory; 5 = satisfactory; 6 = highly satisfactory; n.p. = not provided; n.a. = not applicable.

<sup>b</sup> Arithmetic average of ratings for relevance, effectiveness and efficiency.

<sup>c</sup> This is not an average of ratings of individual impact domains.

<sup>d</sup> This is not an average of ratings of individual evaluation criteria but an overarching assessment of the project, drawing upon the rating for relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, rural poverty impact, sustainability, innovation and scaling up, and gender.

<sup>e</sup> The rating for partners' performance is not a component of the overall assessment ratings.

<i>Ratings of the PCR document quality</i>	<i>PMD rating</i>	<i>IOE PCRV rating</i>	<i>Net disconnect</i>
Scope	6	5	-1
Quality (methods, data, participatory process)	5	5	0
Lessons	5	5	0
Candour	5	5	0
<b>Overall rating of PCR</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>

## Definition of the evaluation criteria used by IOE

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Definition<sup>a</sup></i>
<b>Project performance</b>	
Relevance	The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, institutional priorities and partner and donor policies. It also entails an assessment of project design in achieving its objectives.
Effectiveness	The extent to which the development intervention's objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance.
Efficiency	A measure of how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted into results.
<b>Rural poverty impact<sup>b</sup></b>	Impact is defined as the changes that have occurred or are expected to occur in the lives of the rural poor (whether positive or negative, direct or indirect, intended or unintended) as a result of development interventions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Household income and assets</li> </ul>	Household income provides a means of assessing the flow of economic benefits accruing to an individual or group, whereas assets relate to a stock of accumulated items of economic value.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Human and social capital and empowerment</li> </ul>	Human and social capital and empowerment include an assessment of the changes that have occurred in the empowerment of individuals, the quality of grassroots organizations and institutions, and the poor's individual and collective capacity.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Food security and agricultural productivity</li> </ul>	Changes in food security relate to availability, access to food and stability of access, whereas changes in agricultural productivity are measured in terms of yields.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natural resources, the environment and climate change</li> </ul>	The focus on natural resources and the environment involves assessing the extent to which a project contributes to changes in the protection, rehabilitation or depletion of natural resources and the environment as well as in mitigating the negative impact of climate change or promoting adaptation measures.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Institutions and policies</li> </ul>	The criterion relating to institutions and policies is designed to assess changes in the quality and performance of institutions, policies and the regulatory framework that influence the lives of the poor.
<b>Other performance criteria</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sustainability</li> </ul>	The likely continuation of net benefits from a development intervention beyond the phase of external funding support. It also includes an assessment of the likelihood that actual and anticipated results will be resilient to risks beyond the project's life.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Innovation and scaling up</li> </ul>	The extent to which IFAD development interventions have: (i) introduced innovative approaches to rural poverty reduction; and (ii) the extent to which these interventions have been (or are likely to be) replicated and scaled up by government authorities, donor organizations, the private sector and others agencies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gender equality and women's empowerment</li> </ul>	The criterion assesses the efforts made to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in the design, implementation, supervision and implementation support, and evaluation of IFAD-assisted projects.
<b>Overall project achievement</b>	This provides an overarching assessment of the project, drawing upon the analysis made under the various evaluation criteria cited above.
<b>Performance of partners</b>	This criterion assesses the contribution of partners to project design, execution, monitoring and reporting, supervision and implementation support, and evaluation. It also assesses the performance of individual partners against their expected role and responsibilities in the project life cycle.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IFAD</li> <li>Government</li> </ul>	

<sup>a</sup> These definitions have been taken from the OECD/DAC *Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management* and from the IFAD Evaluation Manual (2009).

<sup>b</sup> The IFAD Evaluation Manual also deals with the "lack of intervention", that is, no specific intervention may have been foreseen or intended with respect to one or more of the five impact domains. In spite of this, if positive or negative changes are detected and can be attributed in whole or in part to the project, a rating should be assigned to the particular impact domain. On the other hand, if no changes are detected and no intervention was foreseen or intended, then no rating (or the mention "not applicable") is assigned.

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