

Independent Office  
of Evaluation



## **Building partnerships for enhanced development effectiveness – a review of country-level experiences and lessons**

**Evaluation synthesis**

**Approach paper**

# Contents

<b>Abbreviations and acronyms .....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>I. Background .....</b>	<b>1</b>
A. Introduction .....	1
B. IFAD's mandate and strategic focus.....	1
C. Partnerships and development effectiveness.....	2
<b>II. Overview of IFAD partnership policies and strategies .....</b>	<b>2</b>
A. IFAD policies on partnership .....	2
B. IFAD's definition of partnership .....	3
C. Examples of partnership practices .....	3
D. Ongoing partnership initiatives .....	4
<b>III. IFAD evaluation evidence on partnerships .....</b>	<b>7</b>
A. Evaluating IFAD partnerships.....	7
B. Evidence from independent evaluation.....	8
C. Evidence reported by management .....	9
C. Other sources of information .....	10
<b>IV. Synthesis objectives, scope and methodology.....</b>	<b>10</b>
A. Objectives.....	10
B. Scope and approach .....	10
C. Methodology.....	11
<b>V. Implementation arrangements.....</b>	<b>17</b>
A. Evaluation management and team .....	17
B. Learning partnership .....	18

## **Abbreviations and acronyms**

APR	Asia and Pacific Division of IFAD
CLE	corporate-level evaluation
CPE	country programme evaluation
CSPE	country strategy and programme evaluation
ECG	Evaluation Cooperation Group
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
ESA	East and Southern Africa Division of IFAD
IFI	International Financial Institution
IOE	Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD
PCR/V	project completion report validation
PPA	project performance assessment
PPP	Public-private partnership
PRM	Partnership and Resource Mobilization Office
PTA	Policy and Technical Advisory Division of IFAD
SKD	Strategy and Knowledge Department of IFAD
WCA	West and Central Africa Division of IFAD
WFP	World Food Programme

# **I. Background**

## **A. Introduction**

1. The Independent Office of Evaluation (IOE) produces evaluation syntheses on selected topics every year, in compliance with IFAD Evaluation Policy. The main aim of such syntheses is to facilitate learning and the use of evaluation findings by identifying and capturing accumulated knowledge and findings across a variety of common themes. Synthesizing existing evaluation material allows evaluation evidence to be packaged and fed into the decision-making process when neither the time nor resources are available to undertake a full-fledged evaluation.
2. This synthesis report on partnership practices and results responds directly to an expectation identified in the midterm review of the 10th Replenishment, where it states that *'A working group on partnerships coordinated implementation of the strategy during IFAD9 and recently completed a progress review and developed a workplan for IFAD10. The next detailed assessment will take place in 2018, after the planned IOE evaluation synthesis report on partnerships (2017)'*.
3. The synthesis will provide learning opportunities for IFAD by identifying and capturing accumulated knowledge from existing evaluative, and other credible, evidence on how partnership building can enhance IFAD's development effectiveness. Within this, the aim will be to identify lessons relevant to different forms of partnership. The findings and lessons from this report are expected to contribute to a better understanding of partnerships and their role in achieving development results, and they may inform the revision of IFAD's partnership strategy as well as the elaboration of applicable criteria in IOE evaluations. The draft report will be shared for discussion with IFAD Management and, as part of IOE's approved programme of work, will be presented to the Evaluation Committee in 2018.

## **B. IFAD's mandate and strategic focus**

4. IFAD is the only international financial institution with a specific mandate to reduce rural poverty through investments in agriculture and rural development. It was established as a specialized UN agency and an international financial institution in 1977 to mobilize resources to invest in development opportunities for poor rural people. The fund works in close collaboration with borrowing country governments and local communities to design, supervise and assess country-led programmes and projects that support smallholders and poor rural producers.
5. The Agreement Establishing IFAD requires IFAD (article 8) to "cooperate closely" with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the other organizations of the United Nations system, as well as with international financial institutions, CSOs and governmental and intergovernmental agencies concerned with agricultural development. Article 8 also identifies the Executive Board as the authority to decide on IFAD entering into agreement or establishing working arrangements with partners.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Article 8 Section 1 - Relations with the United Nations: The Fund shall enter into negotiations with the United Nations with a view to concluding an agreement to bring it into relationship with the United Nations as one of the specialized agencies referred to in Article 57 of the Charter of the United Nations. Any agreements concluded in accordance with Article 63 of the Charter shall require the approval of the Governing Council, by a two-thirds majority of the total number of votes, upon the recommendation of the Executive Board.

Section 2 - Relations with other Organizations, Institutions and Agencies: The Fund shall cooperate closely with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and other organizations of the United Nations system. It shall also cooperate closely with other intergovernmental organizations, international financial institutions, non-governmental organizations and governmental agencies concerned with agricultural development. To this end, the Fund will seek the collaboration in its activities of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the other bodies referred to above, and may enter into agreements or establish working arrangements with such bodies, as may be decided by the Executive Board.

## C. Partnerships and development effectiveness

6. Partnership principles have been central in the **aid effectiveness agenda**, starting with the First High Level Forum in Rome (2002) which called for stronger partnerships and cooperation at country level. The Second High Level Forum in Paris (2005) concluded with a commitment to five partnership principles for improved aid effectiveness, including country ownership, donor harmonization and alignment, and greater focus on and mutual accountability for development results. These principles were followed up during the Third High Level Forum in Accra (2008) through a broad-based alliance of development partners. The Fourth High Level Forum in Busan (2011) marked a shift in focus from aid effectiveness to the broader concept of **development effectiveness**, which provided a new inclusive framework beyond traditional donors and governments. It emphasized the important role of a wider range of development stakeholders such as the private sector, civil society organizations (CSOs), parliamentarians and local authorities for effective results on the ground.
7. The inclusive framework on partnerships was further elaborated by the High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (2013) which called for a new global partnership: "A new partnership should be based on a common understanding of our shared humanity, underpinning mutual respect and mutual benefit in a shrinking world. This partnership should involve governments *but also include others: people living in poverty, those with disabilities, women, civil society and indigenous and local communities, traditionally marginalized groups, multilateral institutions, local and national government, the business community, academia and private philanthropy*".<sup>2</sup> The need for diverse and inclusive partnerships was reiterated in the **Agenda 2030** which includes a dedicated goal: SDG 17 on multi-stakeholder partnerships and voluntary commitments for sustainable development.

## II. Overview of IFAD partnership policies and strategies

### A. IFAD policies on partnership

8. Whilst partnerships have always been part of IFAD's business model, as part of the consultations for the Eighth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources, the organization confirmed that it needed to take a more systematic and strategic approach to partnerships and defined a number of priority areas for action.
9. The Strategic Framework 2011-2015, therefore highlighted the need for the organization "to strengthen its capacity to lead or contribute to national and international initiatives around small-scale agriculture, food security and rural poverty reduction". To this end, the Framework included "effective partnerships and resource mobilization" as one of eight principles of engagement. Under this principle, the Fund would "seek partnership opportunities and enhance its capacity to operate effectively with partners [...] in all thematic areas and at all levels." Concurrently, IFAD committed itself to reporting back to the Executive Board in September 2011 on the success of its efforts to develop a more selective approach to partnerships and the progress achieved in the priority areas for action. This it did, through an information note on progress in developing a more strategic approach to partnership and collaboration, which further committed IFAD to preparing a partnership strategy.
10. The resulting 2012 partnership strategy recognized that IFAD was already working with a wide array of partners in all aspects of its work. The need was to ensure that partnerships supported the achievement of IFAD's strategic objectives (its corporate management results) and the strategy identified four broad partnership priorities: better country programmes and projects; better inputs into global policy

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<sup>2</sup> The Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, UN 2013

dialogue; increased mobilization of resources; and improved organizational efficiency.

11. The strategy proposed building upon IFAD's successful partnerships and identified the need to generate and strengthen in-house awareness on best partnership practices. It defined the following four strategic objectives:
  - a. IFAD shall use its corporate strategic priorities as the basis for determining its partnership requirements, and be selective in its identification of partners;
  - b. develop, manage and monitor its partnerships more effectively and efficiently;
  - c. be a "partner of choice" for others; and
  - d. through its partnerships, assist other rural development stakeholders in becoming more relevant, effective and efficient.
12. The new IFAD Strategic Framework 2016-2025 identifies partnerships both as one of its five principles of engagement and also as one of the means of strengthening the quality of IFAD's country programmes. The document goes on to identify the need for enhancing partnerships at both the global level and within countries as key for achieving Agenda 2030 and that given the magnitude of IFAD's agenda and the investments required for smallholder agriculture development and rural transformation, partnerships will continue to be central to its work. In addition to strengthening successful existing partnerships - collaboration with the Rome-based agencies will be of strategic priority - and developing new ones, especially with partners with complementary areas of expertise, the IFAD Strategic Framework calls for IFAD to continue to engage with the international development community to build support around global issues affecting rural communities. At country level, it calls for IFAD to facilitate multi-stakeholder partnerships between governments, the private sector and small-scale rural producers through, amongst other mechanisms, South-South and Triangular Cooperation.

## **B. IFAD's definition of partnership**

13. A review by the UN Joint Inspection Unit (2013) found that there is no clear definition for partnerships in general or implementing partners in particular. United Nations system organizations use various terms and definitions depending on their business models and type of intervention.
14. IFAD has adopted a broad and inclusive definition of partnership that emphasizes the collaborative spirit of a relationship. In the 2012 Partnership Strategy, partnerships are defined as *'Collaborative relationships between institutional actors that combine their complementary strengths and resources and work together in a transparent, equitable and mutually beneficial way to achieve a common goal or undertake specific tasks. Partners share the risks, responsibilities, resources and benefits of that collaboration and learn from it through regular monitoring and review'*.<sup>3</sup>
15. The synthesis will use this definition of partnerships as a conceptual framework (see for example figures 4 and 6 below), but also point out aspects where greater clarity or focus may be needed as the analysis progresses.

## **C. Examples of partnership practices**

16. In IFAD's business model, partnerships with governments are the basis for the formulation of rural development programmes that respond to country- and area-specific needs. However, the success of these programmes very much relies on collaboration with other development partners, research institutions, the business sector and civil society.

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<sup>3</sup> A similar definition of collaborative partnerships was adopted by some other UN organisations, such as UNIDO and WFP.

17. Some partnerships are formalized through Memoranda of Understanding -MoU or different types of agreements such as:
- financing agreements with member states governments at the country level; this is the most common form of partnership that provides the foundation of IFAD's work at country level.
  - supplementary funds agreements at different levels with multilateral and bilateral organizations such as OFID, OECD countries, the World Bank and the EU.
  - grant agreements for projects and activities at the global, regional and national levels with a number of networks and knowledge platforms which pioneer innovation in research for agricultural development (civil society organizations)
  - institutional partnership agreements with UN agencies, multilateral and bilateral development agencies.
  - In addition to the above agreements, IFAD brokers partnerships between different players, promoting and facilitating partnerships between national or local governments and rural producers 'organizations, between governments and private-sector players, or between rural producer organizations and the private sector.
18. Many partnerships and particularly those at the national and local levels are less formal and are not governed by any form of agreement. They function effectively on the basis of long-term cooperation and established trust and might end with the completion of a project. For instance, some partnerships are established at the local level with service providers, or for knowledge sharing. Informal partnerships are established as well at IFAD country office level where they contribute to policy dialogue and policy engagement. Other informal partnerships often work with civil society organisations and development partners.
19. The following graph provides a tentative classification of different **types of partnerships** in IFAD. For the purpose of this synthesis we shall focus on partnerships that were formalised at the country level, in particular loans, supplementary funding/co-financing and grants within the operational part of IFAD's programme. We shall look at other informal partnerships as far as they are documented in the available evaluations.

#### **D. Ongoing partnership initiatives**

20. IFAD has embarked on a number of partnerships initiatives, in line with its mandate and strategic framework. To illustrate the range of partnership initiatives in IFAD the following section presents some illustrative examples, which are neither complete nor comprehensive.
21. **Partnerships with Rome-based Agencies (RBAs)**. Collaboration among the United Nations Rome-based agencies (RBAs), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and World Food Programme (WFP), is a core priority for all the three organizations at local, regional and global levels. The current and ongoing priorities for RBA collaboration are: country-level implementation of the 2030 Agenda; nutrition; resilience; data and statistics; and joint technical support to the Committee on World Food Security (CFS). In 2015, all three RBAs collaborated on 26 projects in 21 countries. The KCEP-CRAL in Kenya is an example where FAO, WFP and IFAD have come together in partnership.
22. **Operational partnerships with multilateral development banks** (Asian Development Bank, African Development Bank, Central American Bank for Economic Integration, Andean Development Corporation – Development Bank of Latin America) include information sharing on lessons learned, scaling up of successful pilots, coordination of regional and country operations and

harmonization of project design and implementation process. For example, the first cooperation agreement between IFAD and the **African Development Bank** dates back to 1978. Between 2000 and 2014 IFAD cofinanced ten projects with **Asian Development Bank**, totalling US\$168 million in loans and grants focused on rural infrastructure and livelihoods in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Pakistan, and the Philippines.

23. The **IFAD-GEF partnership** facilitates interventions that capitalize on linkages between GEF strategic priorities and IFAD programmes and projects, to make them mutually reinforcing and to ensure maximum financial and ecological sustainability. The IFAD-GEF unit became the Environment and Climate Division (ECD) in 2010. It works with country programme managers to design components that complement IFAD loan-funded projects by reinforcing the sustainability of outcomes to enable governments to meet their national commitments on environment and climate.
24. **European Union.** IFAD and the EU have an ongoing partnership at a global, regional and country level in different areas: pro-poor agricultural research, remittances for development, support to farmer organization networks, public-private sector partnerships and agricultural risk management. Since 1978, the EU has co-financed numerous IFAD-supported projects in Africa, in Latin America and the Caribbean and in Eastern Europe. A Contribution Agreement was signed in 2008 to channel, through IFAD, EU financial support to the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) centres. The EU and IFAD signed, on 4 October 2012, an MoU to further strengthen cooperation and to join resources for scaling up their respective support to food and nutrition security and agriculture and increase impact in these fields.
25. **Technical cooperation and research.** IFAD also depends on partnerships to strengthen the technical content of its interventions, for example through applied and action research. In this regard there is a longstanding partnership with the CGIAR, in pursuance of effective agriculture research for development (AR4D).
26. **Private sector partnerships** are a key element of IFAD's strategic plan because they allow to leverage the resources of the private sector in order to scale up development interventions and reach more poor rural people. As stated in IFAD's Strategic Framework 2011-2015, "As local and international private companies increasingly invest in agriculture, IFAD will partner with them to build mutually beneficial relations between small-scale producers and larger enterprises." IFAD's experience in partnering with the private-sector centres on its role as a facilitator and 'honest broker'. Through the projects and programmes that it supports, IFAD has forged partnerships between private companies and groups of small-scale producers along specific value chains.
27. IFAD's value chain development projects involve forging linkages between small-scale producers and private companies. The rationale for the public sector to engage in and facilitate partnerships with the private sector is to harness the private sector's expertise, efficiencies and investment capital, while reducing the costs of delivering private-sector services by providing public goods (such as infrastructure, an enabling environment and seed capital). IFAD is promoting the "4P" (public-private-producer partnerships) arrangement, which ensures that smallholder producers are respected partners and important partnership principles, such as transparency, fairness and accountability, are followed, especially when it comes to recognizing local communities' tenure rights (to land, water and forests), the role of women and environmental issues. For example, in Nigeria IFAD facilitated a partnership between Olam Nigeria Limited and rice farmers in Benue State.
28. **Civil society partnerships.** IFAD partners with CSOs in a number of ways. For example, partnership with Oxfam NOVIB has enabled IFAD to pilot innovative

gender approaches. With support from an IFAD grant, Oxfam Novib is implementing the project "Integrating household methodologies into agricultural extension, value chains and rural finance in sub-Saharan Africa" in Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda. In Uganda the project piloted a community-led methodology for market/value chain development (VCD), which involved local organizations in the coffee, maize, beans and fruits value chains.

29. **Farmers' organizations** (FOs) are strategic partners for IFAD as institutions that deliver services to their members, speak on their behalf and are becoming key actors in social and policy dialogue at the local, national and international levels. The partnership between IFAD and FOs is part of the modus operandi of IFAD. At country level, IFAD's partnership with FOs has focused on two main strategies consisting in enhancing FOs' involvement in IFAD's country strategies (COSOP) and projects' design; and enhancing FOs involvement in the implementation IFAD-supported projects through a tripartite partnership between governments, IFAD and FOs. At the regional level, IFAD has supported the institutional development of FOs networks through regional programmes.
30. At a global level, the Farmers' Forum is the overall framework of the partnership between IFAD and FOs. Launched in 2005 and fully aligned with IFAD's strategic objectives, the Farmers' Forum was established as a permanent process of consultation and dialogue between FOs and rural producers' organizations, IFAD and governments, focusing on rural development and poverty reduction. IFAD developed important alliances and strategic partnerships with other donors and partners (such as the World Bank, Agence Française de Développement, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Agricorn) through regional programmes to build the capacity of FOs and support their networks. IFAD helps broker innovative public-private-producer partnerships (4Ps) that bring together FOs and private sector operators to ensure that public-private collaborations are also benefiting small producers.
31. **Indigenous peoples.** Since its establishment in 1978, IFAD has paid particular attention to indigenous peoples' issues, mainly in Latin America and Asia. The main instruments for IFAD support to indigenous peoples are loans, and grants at country and regional levels and participation in the global debate on indigenous peoples' issues. The Indigenous Peoples Forum was established in 2011 to institutionalize a process of constructive dialogue and consultation among indigenous peoples' organizations, IFAD staff and member states. The Global Meeting of the Indigenous Peoples' Forum convenes every other year in conjunction with IFAD's Governing Council. Regional workshops are organized to ensure that the Forum reflects the diversity of perspectives and recommendations gathered from indigenous peoples in the various regions.<sup>4</sup>
32. IFAD plays a lead role in a number of networks and knowledge platforms. In 2014, IFAD helped to establish the **Platform for Agricultural Risk Management** (PARM), a four-year initiative to facilitate the identification, assessment, quantification and management of agricultural risks in partner countries. It is currently supported by the Government of the French Republic, the European Commission, the Italian Development Cooperation and the New Partnership for Africa's Development. IFAD also provides core funding to the Committee on World Food Security which is an inclusive international and intergovernmental platform to coordinate initiatives on food security and nutrition.

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<sup>4</sup> The 3rd global meeting documentation includes a list of COSOPs approved in 2015/2016 that are targeting Indigenous Peoples.

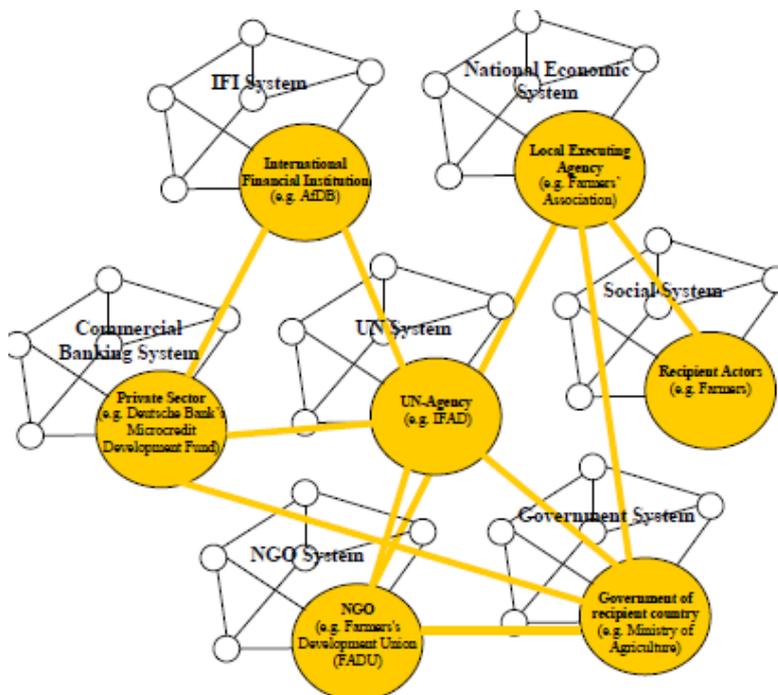
### III. IFAD evaluation evidence on partnerships

#### A. Evaluating IFAD partnerships

33. The 2008 Joint African Development Bank (AfDB)-IFAD Evaluation of Agriculture in Africa included a first attempt to conceptualize the types of IFAD partnerships. The evaluation defined development partnerships within a systemic approach. The various actors are part of a mobile system of mutual relationships and dependencies whereby every participating actor is also part of other sub- or supra-systems. The boundaries of cooperation systems are flexible and tend to expand in the course of implementation as new opportunities and strategic options arise. The dynamic and open-ended nature of partnership systems presents a challenge for any evaluation.

Figure 2

IFAD partnerships as a system<sup>5</sup>



34. Furthermore, the evaluation highlighted that in partnerships the aspects that can be precisely measured and quantified are only one part of the reality of the participating actors. Powerful and intangible aspects of partnerships, such as motivation and the quality of the relationship, require exchange and dialogue. This poses some clear challenges and limitations to any evaluation of partnerships, in particular for a synthesis which is primarily desk based.
35. Therefore, the Joint AfDB-IFAD Evaluation recommended to focus less on the assessment of quantifiable results, but also to include an assessment of partnership processes and structures which are not visible at first sight. This includes: (i) the partnership structure and governance - how is the partnership organized and how is it taking decisions on its work? (ii) the partnership process - how do the different actors interact and learn in the partnership?; and (iii) the partnership performance.-.what are the results achieved in terms of outcome and sustainability?

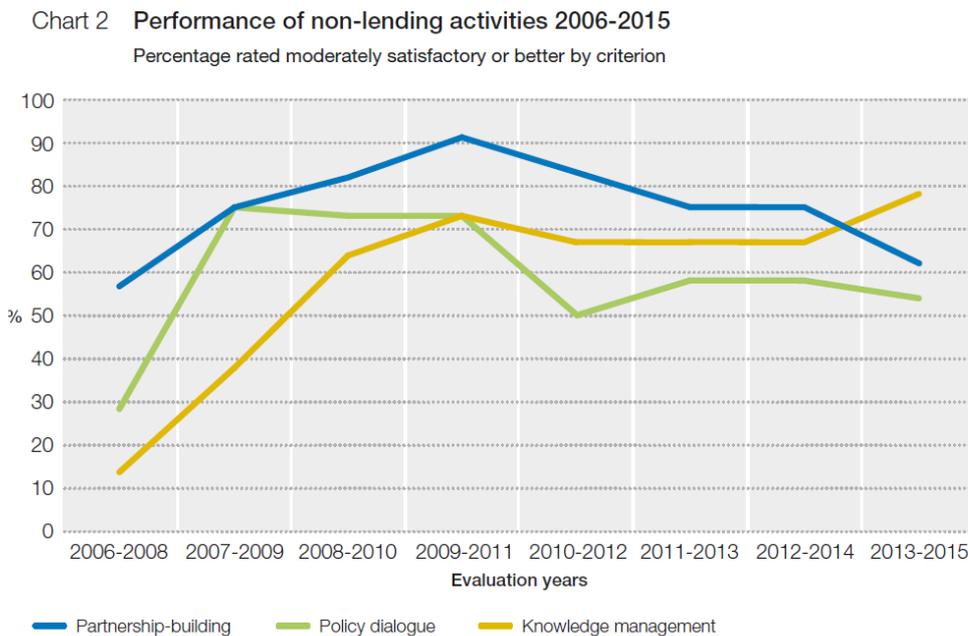
<sup>5</sup> From the Joint AfDB-IFAD Evaluation, 2008.

36. IOE has been assessing partnership results since it introduced its *Methodological Framework for Project Evaluation* in 2003 when an evaluation question was specified asking: Has IFAD been active in creating an effective partnership for implementation? The 2015 Evaluation Manual examines the performance of partners. The manual states that all country programme and project evaluations should assess and attribute a rating to the performance of IFAD and governments. The focus is on the functioning of the partnership between IFAD and the concerned government. The country strategy and programme evaluations (CSPEs) would also assess the extent to which partnerships have developed beyond implementing partners, based on the aspirations of the COSOPs.

## **B. Evidence from independent evaluation**

37. Partnerships are covered in different ways in IOE evaluation products. The following sources of evidence will be of relevance for this synthesis.
38. **Corporate-level evaluations (CLEs)** will be an important source of evidence for this synthesis. In addition to the Joint AfDB-IFAD Evaluation (2008) the 2011 CLE on private-sector development had an explicit focus on partnerships. Most of the other CLEs also contain information on partnerships. Since the partnership strategy was introduced in 2012, the CLEs covered issues of partnerships systematically under almost every evaluation theme. A review of the seven CLEs produced by IOE since 2012 clearly indicates that six of the seven include findings and conclusions on the status of partnerships and their role in IFAD delivering greater results (the exception is the 2014 Evaluation of IFAD Replenishments). The CLEs also include background material, such as country case studies, which may be of use for this synthesis.
39. **Country strategy and programme evaluations (CSPEs).** Forty CSPEs have been published since 2006 based on a consistent methodology, including the use of ratings, which allows aggregation of results across country programmes. The evaluations assess three interrelated components: (i) portfolio level analysis of IFAD-supported projects included in the CSPE scope; (ii) non-lending activities – policy dialogue, knowledge management, partnership building; and (iii) the performance of partners (i.e. IFAD and the government) in managing the country programme, including process aspects. The performance of government partners is reviewed in some detail, in particular the volume and nature of resources provided and the quality of project management and coordination.
40. Findings on partnerships are reported under all three components. Partnership building, i.e. with partners beyond government counterparts, is systematically assessed under non-lending activities, for example the extent to which partnerships had been built in line with the stated intentions of the applicable COSOP, in addition to indicators such as the number of partnerships enhanced through the implementation of the country programme and resources leveraged through partnerships.
41. The below analysis of trends in rating of partnership building across the 36 CSPEs completed between 2006 and 2015 indicates a rising trend in rating of partnership building performance until 2009-11 and a subsequent decline since 2012. The synthesis will further review if this trend can be confirmed within the wider set and how this can be explained. A more differentiated quantitative analysis of partnership ratings will be done as part of this synthesis.

Figure 3  
**Performance of non-lending activities 2006-2015**



Source: ARRI 2016

42. **Project level evaluations (PPAs/PPEs).** PPEs assess the performance of government partners with a view to their role and responsibility in the project life cycle, and in some cases where they could have performed better. PPAs/PPEs rate the performance of government partners (only). In addition they may provide a qualitative review of the cooperation with other partners involved in the project, in particular through co-financing.
43. **Evaluation synthesis reports (ESRs)** cover partnership issues under various themes. In particular the ESRs on policy engagement (forthcoming) and on South-South Cooperation (2016) will be relevant.

### C. Evidence reported by management

44. **Report on IFAD's Development Effectiveness (RIDE).** The RIDE reports ratings on government performance as an indicator of the IFAD's contribution to development outcomes and impact. The data is derived from project completion reports. Partnership-building as an indicator is new and was measured for the first time in 2013. Partnership-building is rated as an indicator of the operational effectiveness of country programmes and projects management, where IFAD has made specific commitments in the context of the development effectiveness agenda. The information is derived from a client survey. The RIDE also covers partnership as an action area in the implementation of the IFAD Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, using indicators such as: (i) increase in focus on gender issues in policy dialogue and scaling up; and (ii) increase in joint initiatives on gender-related activities with other development partners.
45. **Portfolio performance reviews (PPRs).** In the portfolio performance review (country programme reports) observations on partnerships are in some cases reported in the strategic objectives in the COSOP results framework, as a supporting evidence to aid effectiveness and finally in the country context. The portfolio performance review does not rate partnerships.
46. **Project completion reports (PCRs)** provide a brief description of partner performance in managing the project (IFAD, government, CSOs, microfinance institutions, co-financiers, private sector) and how they performed with respect to their roles defined in the project design. They provide an overall partner

performance rating and a justification, which describes weaknesses and strengths of partners as well as their role in delivering major or minor results.

### **C. Other sources of information**

47. **COSOPs** include information on ongoing or intended partnerships. They indicate opportunities for potential partnerships in support of their strategic objectives, taking into account the area of focus and priority sectors of each. These partnerships could be for the purpose of project implementation, policy dialogue, innovation or knowledge management and may involve co-financing, sector-wide approaches, joint policy work and sharing of experience. Moreover, the COSOPs include a short assessment of what has been achieved in terms of the partnership building and as well as a SWOT analysis of different partners.
48. **GRIPS**. The IFAD Grants and Investment Project System (GRIPS) is the corporate vehicle for the collection and dissemination of information related to IFAD grant and loan financed projects. For the purpose of this synthesis, GRIPS is used to extract information on a large number of projects and grants that allows for quantitative analysis along a number of different criteria. These include, inter alia, allocated funding proportions of IFAD and its partners, partner types (domestic, international), the country in which projects are executed, and the thematic type of project.
49. **Clients surveys**. The clients survey is one of the many reporting tools for the Replenishment Corporate Results Measurement Framework (RMF), in particular for level 4 Country programme and Project Management. The four indicators that are measured through the client survey are: i) Adherence to aid effectiveness agenda; ii) Contribution to increasing incomes, improving food security, and empowering the rural poor women and men; iii) Engagement in national policy dialogue and support for participation in policy discussion; iv) Effectiveness in partnership-building.

## **IV. Synthesis objectives, scope and methodology**

### **A. Objectives**

50. The synthesis focuses on learning more than on accountability. It derives its lessons primarily from existing evaluative evidence. The objectives of this synthesis are thus to inform the assessment of IFAD's Partnership Strategy by Management in 2018:
  - a. Based on evidence from IFAD evaluations, explore the types of partnerships that have enabled IFAD to deliver on its mandate, to reduce rural poverty, at country level;
  - b. Explore the comparative strengths and weakness of different types of partners in enabling IFAD to achieve the its partnership objectives, to increase outreach and expand impact on rural poverty reduction with limited resources;
  - c. Identify the enabling or disabling factors to explain why partnerships have developed (or not) under certain conditions and how they could be improved;
  - d. Identify lessons on the role of ICOs in building effective partnerships for greater development effectiveness.

### **B. Scope and approach**

51. While partnerships operate at global, regional and country level, this synthesis will focus on the operation of partnerships at the **country level**. This is where the synthesis can add most value to the partnership strategy, by reviewing the evaluative evidence available from CPEs/CSPEs and relevant CLEs, which focuses mainly on the operation of IFAD's evolving business model and the implications for results at the country level (whether nationally through policy and regulatory change or at the level of individual projects/programmes).

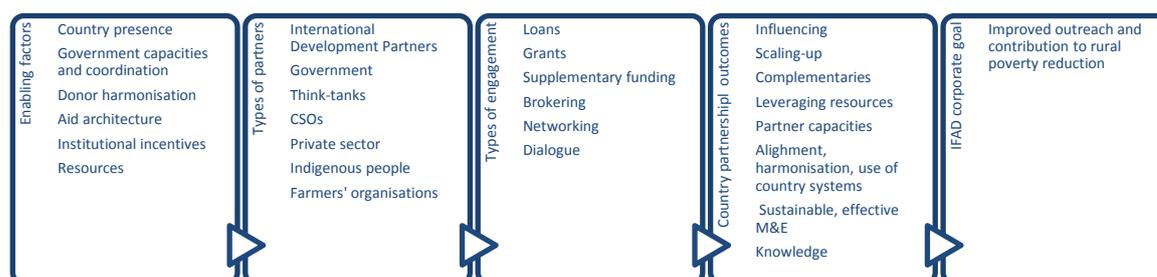
52. Within this we will attempt, where feasible, to examine whether assumptions in the strategy have differing implications across differing **types of partners**. Both the Strategy and the Evaluation Manual broadly identify the same range of partners: member governments; civil society organizations, particularly those of smallholder farmers and other groups of rural people; other UN agencies; bilateral and multilateral development agencies; international agricultural research centres; CSOs and foundations; policy research institutes and universities; regional organizations; and private sector players.
53. **Government** is the most important partner for IFAD. Currently, IFAD has 176 member states and is working in partnership with government in almost 100 countries. Government is the main partner implementing IFAD-supported programmes and projects. This synthesis will not review government performance as an implementing partner. Instead, it will look at government's role in facilitating IFAD's partnerships in the countries under review.
54. While the focus of the analysis is at the **country level**, it is understood that partnership agreements are usually the result of engagement processes at **global level** that will involve IFAD headquarters. Thus, priorities for certain partnerships, e.g. co-financing agreements with the EU or AfDB, have to be understood in the context of the existing corporate-level frameworks, policies and agreements.
55. **Timeframe**. The period covered by this synthesis will start from 2006, after the first CSPE that rated partnership performance was completed. For the period 2006-2016, the synthesis will review a sample of CLEs and CPSEs that contain substantive evidence on the contribution of partnerships within IFAD operations.

## C. Methodology

### C1. Preparing the theory of change

56. Underpinning IFAD's partnership approach are a number of theories for how the proposed interventions identified will lead to more effective partnerships and hence to greater levels of results from IFAD investments. Therefore, the synthesis is focused on examining whether evaluative evidence confirms the theories that underpin IFAD's strategies and the main interventions identified:

Figure 4  
Draft theory of change



57. Evaluations seek mainly to answer three types of question. What happened, how did it happen and why did it happen. Our first steps are therefore to: (i) elaborate and make explicit the theory of change (ToC) that the above areas are intended to deliver; (ii) **how and why** partnerships would contribute to the achievement of IFAD's goal at country level; (iii) what the main factors explaining the development of partnerships (or not). This would be done through:
  - a. Developing a ToC that captures the expected outcomes at country-level and how different types of partners and types of engagements would contribute to such outcomes, based on an initial review of documents;

- b. The ToC will be further elaborated during a workshop with PMD, PRM and other key informants within IFAD;
  - c. The ToC will provide the analytical framework for the synthesis of evaluation findings. It will be further detailed and validated based on the evidence obtained from the IOE evaluation.
58. The evidence from the review of the 40 CPEs will be systematically documented in a matrix that reflects the key elements of the ToC, to ensure the consistency of the documentation and support the synthesis of findings at a later stage.
59. The ToC also provides a conceptual framework for exploring causal relations that explain why partnerships grow (or not) and how this may affect the delivery of results on the ground. These causal factors will be need to be better understood through interaction with PMD staff. For example, the availability of financial and human resources for partnership building is a key factor highlighted in many CSPEs and in the recent CLE on decentralization.

## ***C2. Focusing the synthesis and developing specific hypotheses***

60. Partnership building is not an end in itself, but a means for enhanced development effectiveness at country level. Therefore the synthesis will specifically focus on the contribution of partnerships to country-level outcomes and how these are expected to lead to more effective rural poverty reduction.
61. **Review questions.** We propose the following research questions to guide this synthesis:
- **Overall trends and patterns:** What are the trends and patterns with regards to different types of partners and forms of engagement for the review period and how can they be explained? How do they differ for different types of countries (MFS, MICs, LICs)? What explains the good or poor performance on partnership building in “outlier” countries?
  - **Co-financing partnerships:** What are the trends and patterns on co-financing? How can the decrease in co-financing partnerships be explained? To what extent do co-financing partnerships influence the achievement of IFAD’s goals at country level?
  - **Government partners:** What roles do government partners play in partnership building and how do these affect the achievement of IFAD’s goals at country level?
  - **Knowledge and learning partnerships.** How do country, regional and global knowledge and learning partnerships enhance IFAD’s partnership outcomes and goals at country level? How do partnerships with academic institutions, think tanks and research centres contribute to an enhanced knowledge of the results of IFAD financed operations on the ground? What are the practices for engagement with academic institutions and research centres?
  - **Civil society organizations:** To what extent did partnerships with civil society organizations (e.g. Novib) enable more effective interventions in partner countries?
  - **Private sector:** How do partnerships with the private sector influence the achievement of IFAD’s partnership outcomes and goals at country level?
  - **Interagency coordination:** How effective was IFAD’s role in interagency coordination, in particular with RBAs and other IFI’s working in the agricultural sector? What is the relevance and impact of IFAD global partnerships for IFAD partnership outcomes and goals at country level?
  - **IFAD as a partner.** What do other partners expect from IFAD and to what extent has IFAD been able to match these expectations? What evidence is there from independent evaluations to confirm that IFAD is a valued partners?

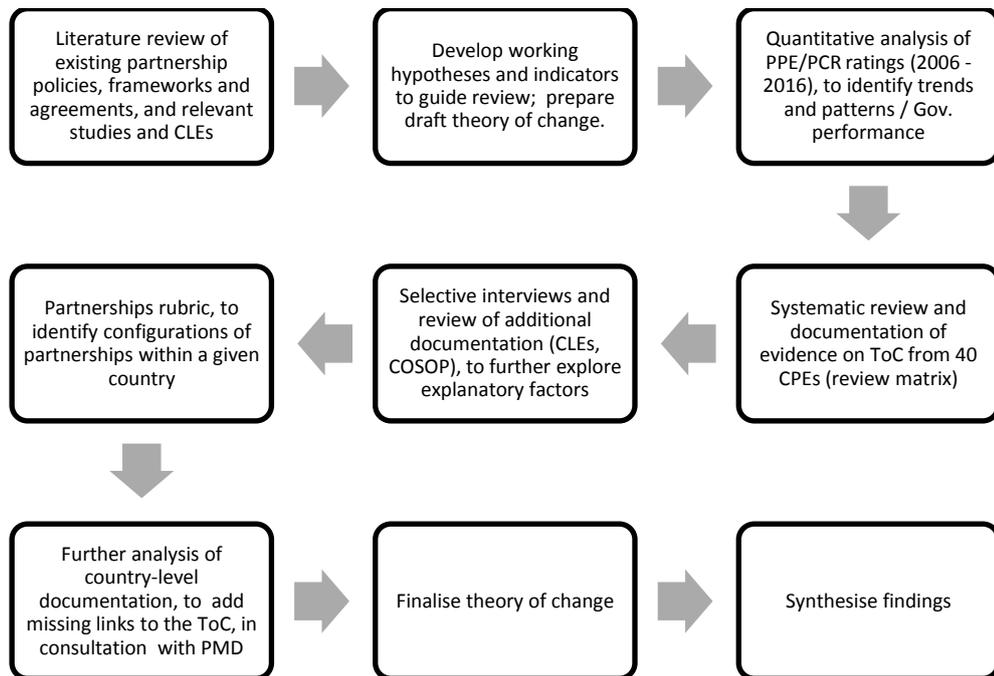
- **Synthesis of findings:** Which types of partners and which forms of engagement work best and under what conditions? What are the key enabling factors for partnership building? What configurations of partnership arrangements are most effective within a given country context? Can the downward trend on partnership performances, as identified in the 2016 ARRI, be confirmed (or not) and how can it be explained?
62. **Hypotheses.** The preparation of the ToC will provide the basis for the identification of working hypotheses. A first set of hypotheses will be developed based on the initial review of the available documentation on partnerships in IFAD. The available studies of ongoing partnerships will be valuable in this respect (e.g. the IDS Study on IFAD's 4P approach). In addition reviews of partnerships with IFAD by other partners, e.g. the AfDB, will help to generate some hypotheses. The preliminary analysis of the (country) portfolio ratings for the period under review will provide some (quantitative) trends and patterns on partnerships that will support the elaboration of further and more detailed review questions for the following documents review.
  63. The review framework which contains the basic evaluation questions from above (see also annex 2) will be further elaborated into a review matrix (evaluation matrix) by adding working hypotheses, more detailed sub-questions and indicators to assess the validity of the ToC. The questions will be drafted to identify the empirical evidence in the sample of reviewed evaluations. Questions will be included that examine whether evaluations offer alternative explanations or theories from the ToC we are testing. This will allow us to then conclude whether the review of the 40 CPEs prepared since 2006 provides sufficient evidence to confirm or reject our hypotheses and ToC, fully or partially.
  64. **Criteria.** With theory-driven approaches, the DAC evaluation criteria are not commonly used, as the ToC is what is used to drive the work, and structure the answers. The synthesis will therefore follow a thematic approach to presenting the findings, based on the evaluation questions above (see annex 1). Performance ratings are not required for a synthesis.

### **C3. The evidence search strategy**

65. Our assumption is that nearly all CLEs (the exceptions would be the regionally focused CLEs and the replenishment CLE) and all CPSEs completed between 2006 and 2016 will include substantial discussion of partnerships and the implications for IFAD performance. However, to test this assumption all 15 CLEs and 40 CPSEs will be assessed to check whether the individual evaluation:
  - a. Clearly identifies and explains factors contributing to partnership building
  - b. Explains programme partnership building and strategy failures
  - c. Includes substantive discussion of partnership issues
66. The search for evidence is likely to be **iterative** because new or refined elements may be required, as the synthesis progresses, to explain how and why certain things happen; and hence a re-examination of previously reviewed evaluations to see whether or not they confirm the revised/changed theory.
67. Credibility depends upon the use of evidence that has been collected with comparable and robust methods. The choice to restrict evidence extraction to evaluations addresses this concern, as it is assumed that all evaluations meet IOE's internal evaluation quality standards. Credible synthesis also depends upon consistency in what is extracted across all evaluations against which hypotheses. To address this risk we will follow standard research good practice. First, by developing detailed guidance on what sorts of evidence are required against each hypothesis. Second, by using **double data extraction** with the initial evaluations assessed to ensure that analysts have a consistent understanding of what they are looking for.

68. The review of the forty CSPEs is expected to yield some findings for comparative analysis, but it is also expected to generate further questions, in particular about the “why”, i.e. why partnerships have developed the way there are or not. To answer this question, the synthesis may focus on the “outliers” (in terms of partnership performance) to better understand why in some countries performance on partnerships has been very good and why not in others. The exploration of the contributing factors will require a focused review of further documentation (e.g. PPAs/PPE, portfolio reviews or COSOP documentation), selective interviews and discussions with selected PMD staff, in particular country programme managers, economists and portfolio advisers. This will enable the preparation of **case studies** explaining why partnerships were effective in a certain context and under certain conditions.
69. A key concern with such syntheses is how much evidence is required to make a judgement and hence stop searching the documentary evidence. A synthesis is credible, and searching can be stopped, when sources of evidence cease to provide new insights and confirm what has already been found and therefore it is reasonable to claim that the theory is coherent and plausible.

Figure 5  
Synthesis process



#### C4. Analytical approach

70. For the synthesis, the unit of analysis is an individual evaluation, in this case a CPE/CSPE. To ensure transparency in synthesis our first step therefore will be to tabulate conclusions on the degree that hypotheses are confirmed, partially confirmed, proven false or an evaluation says nothing at all. In addition, relevant IOE ratings of performance will be included in the **review matrix**. Using a traffic light approach should then allow us to use pattern matching:
  - a. Identify areas in which the theory is confirmed;
  - b. Areas in which it is not confirmed or areas which the evaluations suggests have been missed in the strategy;
  - c. Areas in which evaluations have consistently failed to examine IFAD's partnership performance.
71. The second element of the analysis will be the **partnership rubric**. While the review matrix will help us to track evidence on causal relationships, the rubric will present configurations in a table that includes two axes: types of partners and types of engagements. A rubric will be prepared for each of the countries covered by this synthesis.

Figure 6  
**Proposed rubric for assessing country-level partnerships**

Partners	Types of engagement					
	Loans (1)	Grants (2)	Supplementary funding (3)	Brokering (4)	Networking (5)	Dialogue (6)
International Development partners						
Government						
Think-tanks						
CSOs						
Private sector						
Indigenous people						
Farmers' organizations						

### **C5. Triangulation**

72. Triangulating findings and conclusions against those from evaluations from organisations with a similar business model and objectives to IFAD will not be straightforward. In practice, the obvious comparators are the IFIs. In practice, looking across the four main IFIs:
- World Bank:** There is no single organisation-level evaluation of partnerships available for the World Bank. Several evaluations are dealing with PPPs, but the challenge would be whether findings or conclusions from these evaluations would have external validity and apply in IFAD's context.
  - Asian Development Bank:** A very recent evaluation of partnerships is available - Effectiveness of Asian Development Bank Partnerships (2016). The report assesses the effectiveness of three types of ADB partnerships: interagency coordination partnerships, knowledge partnerships, and financing partnerships. In particular, Appendix G would potentially be very useful.
  - African Development Bank:** There is no single organisation level evaluation of partnerships.
  - Inter-American Development Bank:** There is no single organisation level evaluation of partnerships.
73. The implication is that triangulation will involve adopting a more formal search strategy through a number of evaluations. Possibly the simplest approach would be to talk with key informants within each and ask them to identify the most relevant evaluations once clear what findings and conclusions from the synthesis we want to triangulate.

74. Triangulation will also involve selective interviews and discussion with key PMD staff, to test some of the emerging findings and to gain further insights into the causal factors explaining some of the observed trends and developments.

## **C6. Limitations**

75. Theory based synthesis is dependent upon the quality of evidence available in the evaluations used. The most important limitation therefore is the limited depth of the analysis included in IOE evaluations on how and why change happens. As noted in the 2015 Evaluation Manuel, *'it should also be kept in mind that use of TOC is a fairly recent phenomenon in IFAD'*. Screening the quality of the available evidence will help in identifying a suitable sample of evaluations which include analysis of partnership results as well as seeking to explain why it happened. However, the available evidence will inevitably put a limitation on the degree to which this synthesis can review all parts of the ToC considered important.
76. A second limitation is that IFAD's business processes have evolved significantly over the past decade, and some of these changes will have significant effects upon its partnership approach and how and why things occur. For instance, both evaluations and management identify that having presence in-country has had a significant effect on partnerships created and maintained. It is difficult at this point to judge whether the changes over the past 10 years of evaluations means that the older evaluations are examining a context that too different from the present to be still relevant. Therefore consultations and cross-checks with ongoing partnership initiatives have been built into the synthesis process which will enable qualification of changing priorities, conditions and incentives. However it is expected that the basic principles of partnerships and why they succeed or fail remained more or less unchanged, and therefore the findings and lessons extracted from IOE evaluation of "older" IFAD projects will still be relevant.
77. A final limitation is the nature of IFAD partnerships and the challenges this poses for any evaluation and in particular for a synthesis which is primarily desk based. We therefore anticipate this synthesis to require more interactions than usual with PMD and we have built in a series of consultations and meetings into the review process (see figure 5).

## **V. Implementation arrangements**

### **A. Evaluation management and team**

78. The IFAD team will be led by IOE Lead Evaluation Officer Johanna Pennarz. She will be supported by IOE Evaluation Analysts Diane Abi Khalil and Robert Bourguignon who will document the available evidence from IOE evaluations. The Evaluation Assistant will be Shaun Ryan. During the document review phase, the team will be supported by Antonella Piccolella.
79. **Senior Consultant.** The senior consultant for this synthesis will be Detlev Puetz. He has extensive experience in the evaluation of partnerships from his previous work at the African Development Bank. He has been the evaluation manager for the AfDB on the Joint AfDB-IFAD evaluation. In this synthesis, his role will be to provide feedback during critical stages such as the preparation of the review framework, the documentation of the initial findings and the emerging analysis. As part of his assignment he will review the relevant IFAD policies and strategies.
80. **Independent Senior Advisor.** The Independent Senior Advisor for this synthesis will be Vinod Thomas, former Director General of Independent Evaluation at the Asian Development Bank. He led a number of reviews that have addressed the effectiveness of ADB's strategies, policies, practices, and procedures, including an evaluation of the effectiveness of ADB partnerships. His role will include providing feedback on this approach paper and written comments on the final report.

## B. Learning partnership

81. IOE evaluations commonly establish a Core Learning Partnership (CLP) which include the intended users of the evaluation. The CLP provides inputs, insights and comments into the evaluations at certain stages of the process. The CLP is important in ensuring ownership of the evaluation results by the main stakeholders and utilization of its recommendations. Since evaluation syntheses are desk-based exercises they usually do not include a CLP. However, in this case IOE proposes learning partnership with selected focal points in PMD, which will be consulted at various states of the process. PMD will nominate a focal point for this synthesis. The Partnership and Resource Mobilisation Office (PRM) will be also be closely involved in the process. Other relevant discussions in IFAD (e.g. with the Financial Operations Department, the Global Engagement, Knowledge and Strategy Division, the Communications Division COM) will be included as appropriate.

Table 1

**Time line for this synthesis**

<i>Time</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Note</i>
February - March 2017	Prepare draft approach paper for discussion	Draft prepared by IFAD Lead Evaluation Officer
April	Draft Approach Paper sent to PMD	Director IOE
April	Finalise Approach Paper	Lead Evaluation Officer
5 June	Theory of Change workshop	IOE
June - July	Conduct systematic review of C(S)PE sample; document findings, interviews and interactions with PMD as required	Evaluation Analysts; Senior Consultant PMD
August	Review findings; additional documents review; prepare draft report chapters	Evaluation Analysts; Senior Consultant
September	Draft synthesis report completed	Lead Evaluation Officer
October	Peer review	IOE
October	Report sent to PMD for comments	Director IOE
November	Final report	Lead Evaluation Officer
November	Presentation of findings at learning event	Lead Evaluation Officer

## Annex 1: Outline of synthesis report

Report chapter	Responsibility
I. Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Background</li> <li>• Objectives, scope and key questions</li> <li>• Evidence base and methodology</li> <li>• Limitations</li> <li>• Process</li> </ul>	Johanna Pennarz
II. Context <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnerships – from Paris to Busan</li> <li>• IFAD Strategic Framework and Partnership Strategy</li> </ul>	Johanna Pennarz
III. Analytical framework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnership definition and concept</li> <li>• Theory of change</li> </ul>	Johanna Pennarz
IV. Synthesis findings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall trends and patterns</li> <li>• Co-financing partnerships</li> <li>• Governments as partners</li> <li>• Knowledge and learning partnerships</li> <li>• Civil society organisations, indigenous people and private sector</li> <li>• Global partnerships and country partnership outcomes</li> <li>• Synthesis of findings</li> </ul>	Detlev Puetz
V. Lessons	Johanna Pennarz
VI. Conclusions	Johanna Pennarz
VII. Recommendations	Johanna Pennarz
Annexes (Case studies, data analysis etc.)	Diane Abi Khalil, Nick Bourguignon, Antonella Piccolella

## Annex 2: Draft research framework

Review question	Review method
<b>Overall trends and patterns</b>	
Q.1. What are the trends and patterns with regard to different types of partners and forms of engagement for the review period and how can they be explained?	Quantitative analysis of PPA/PCRIV ratings (2006 – 2016)
Q.2. How do they differ for different types of countries (MFS, MICs, LICs)?	Quantitative analysis of PPA/PCRIV ratings (2006 – 2016)
Q.3. What explains the good or poor performance on partnership building in “outlier” countries?	Qualitative evidence from selected CPEs and background information; interviews
<b>Co-financing partnerships</b>	
Q.4. How can the decrease in co-financing partnerships be explained?	Qualitative analysis of selected PPEs of co-financed projects, supplemented by analysis from CPEs and COSOPs
Q.5. To what extent are co-financing partnerships affecting the achievement of IFAD’s goals at country level?	Analysis from CPEs and COSOPs
<b>Government partners</b>	
Q.6. What roles do government partners play in partnership building and how do these affect the achievement of IFAD’s partnerships outcomes and goals at country level?	Qualitative evidence from 40 CPEs
<b>Knowledge and learning partnerships</b>	
Q.7. How do country, regional and global knowledge and learning partnerships enhance IFAD’s partnership outcomes and goals at country level?	Qualitative evidence from 40 CPEs, supplemented by case studies and feedback from selective interviews/survey responses
Q8. How do partnerships with academic institutions, think tanks and research centres contribute to an enhanced knowledge of the results of IFAD financed operations on the ground? What are the practices for engagement with academic institutions and research centres?	Qualitative evidence from 40 CPEs, supplemented by case studies and feedback from selective interviews/survey responses
<b>Private sector</b>	
Q.9. How do partnerships with the private sector influence the achievement of IFAD’s partnership outcomes and goals at country level?	Qualitative evidence from 40 CPEs, supplemented by case studies and feedback from selective interviews/survey responses
<b>Civil society</b>	
Q.10. To what extent did partnerships with civil society (e.g. Novib) enable more effective interventions in partner countries?	Qualitative evidence from 40 CPEs, supplemented by case studies and feedback from selective interviews/survey responses
<b>Interagency coordination</b>	
Q11. How effective was IFAD’s role in interagency coordination, in particular with RBAs and other IFI’s working in the agricultural sector.	Qualitative evidence from 40 CPEs, supplemented by case studies and feedback from selective interviews/survey responses
Q12. What is the relevance and impact of IFAD global partnerships for IFAD partnership outcomes and goals at country level?	Qualitative evidence from 40 CPEs, supplemented by qualitative analysis of selected global partnerships and feedback from interviews/survey responses
<b>IFAD as partner</b>	
Q.13. What do other partners expect from IFAD and to what extent has IFAD been able to match these expectations?	Client surveys
Q.14. What evidence is there from independent evaluations to confirm that IFAD is a valued partners?	Evidence from 40 CSPEs and selected PPEs

<b>Synthesis of findings</b>	
Q.15. Which types of partners and which forms of engagement work best and under what conditions?	Synthesis of the above; PMD focus group discussion
Q.16. What are the key enabling factors for partnership building?	Synthesis of the above; PMD focus group discussion
Q.17. What configurations of partnership arrangements are most effective within a given country context?	Partnership rubric
Q18. Can the downward trend on partnership performances, as identified in the 2016 ARRI, be confirmed (or not), and how can it be explained?	Interpretation of CPE ratings against synthesis findings

## Annex 3: References

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