

Document: EB 2007/90/R.4  
Agenda: 4(b)  
Date: 21 March 2007  
Distribution: Public  
Original: English

**E**



Enabling the rural poor  
to overcome poverty

## **IFAD Strategy for Knowledge Management**

Executive Board — Ninetieth Session  
Rome, 17-18 April 2007

---

**For: Approval**

## **Note to Executive Board Directors**

This document is submitted for approval by the Executive Board.

To make the best use of time available at Executive Board sessions, Directors are invited to contact the following focal point with any technical questions about this document before the session:

**Mohamed Manssouri**  
Country Programme Manager  
telephone: +39 06 5459 2330  
e-mail: [m.manssouri@ifad.org](mailto:m.manssouri@ifad.org)

Queries regarding the dispatch of documentation for this session should be addressed to:

**Deirdre McGrenra**  
Governing Bodies Officer  
telephone: +39 06 5459 2374  
e-mail: [d.mcgrenra@ifad.org](mailto:d.mcgrenra@ifad.org)

## Contents

<b>Abbreviations and acronyms</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Recommendation for approval</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>I. Background</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>II. Why does IFAD need a knowledge management strategy?</b>	<b>2</b>
A. The changing global context requires new approaches and new learning	2
B. IFAD's development effectiveness depends on improved knowledge capabilities	2
<b>III. The baseline: Assessing the barriers and challenges to overcome</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>IV. The baseline: An inventory of IFAD's assets</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>V. Moving forward: A framework for IFAD knowledge management</b>	<b>7</b>
A. Strengthening knowledge-sharing and learning processes	7
B. Equipping IFAD with a more supportive knowledge-sharing and learning infrastructure	10
C. Fostering partnerships for broader knowledge-sharing and learning	10
D. Promoting a supportive knowledge-sharing and learning culture	11
<b>VI. What are the expected results?</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>VII. What are the expected costs and risks?</b>	<b>12</b>
A. Cost and financing implications	12
B. Risks and risk mitigation measures	13
<b>VIII. Who will do what?</b>	<b>13</b>
A. Roles and responsibilities	13
B. Articulation between knowledge management and other key institutional processes	14

## Appendices

- I. Illustrative inventory of IFAD knowledge assets
- II. Valuing and stimulating local knowledge to enhance poor rural people's knowledge assets: Some promising examples
- III. Results framework

## **Abbreviations and acronyms**

CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
COSOP	country strategic opportunities programme
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
PES	Performance Evaluation System
WFP	World Food Programme

## **Recommendation for approval**

The Executive Board is invited to approve the IFAD Strategy for Knowledge Management as contained in the present document.

*"Knowledge is the only treasure you can give entirely without running short of it."*  
African proverb

*"Knowledge Management is about capturing, creating, distilling, sharing and using know-how. That know-how includes explicit and tacit knowledge. [...] It is not about books of wisdom and best practices, it's more about the communities that keep know-how of a topic alive by sharing what they know, building on it and adapting it to their own use. [...] Call it 'performance through learning', 'shared knowledge', or simply 'working smarter.'"*  
C. Collison and G. Parcell

*"In Africa, when an old man dies, it is a library that burns down."*  
Amadou Hampâté Bâ

## Executive summary

1. In fulfilling its mandate to enable poor rural people to overcome poverty, IFAD deals with many types of knowledge. The most critical knowledge for IFAD is related to "development practice". It is embedded in IFAD-sponsored programmes and projects, its staff and partners and, more broadly, in the development community working on issues of rural poverty and rural development, including poor rural people and their own organizations (for example, rural community and farmers' organizations).
2. This knowledge management strategy is one of the key deliverables of IFAD's Action Plan for Improving Its Development Effectiveness, approved by the Executive Board in December 2005. Its aim is to provide IFAD with the framework and tools required for development effectiveness in a context of dramatic transformations that are changing the face of world agriculture and of rural poverty. Changing realities on the ground mean that IFAD will need to become more agile, devise appropriate innovations and improve its systems and its institutional readiness for more continuous learning and sharing. **It is in the sense of improving its learning from development practice that IFAD will increasingly become a knowledge-based organization.**
3. In preparing this knowledge management strategy, IFAD has consulted widely both within and outside the organization; conducted a baseline assessment of its current knowledge situation; sought to gather, understand and apply the "lessons learned" from the efforts of other institutions; and obtained and incorporated guidance from its Executive Board. As a result, this strategy is based on two key premises:
  - An institution's strategy for knowledge management must be firmly rooted in its core competencies, embedded in its work processes and linked tightly to its main products. Successful knowledge management strategies build on existing assets.
  - While appropriate hardware is essential, the key to successful knowledge management is found in the culture and mindsets of an organization. The right mix of incentives is, therefore, critical.
4. This strategy:
  - identifies a limited number of knowledge themes, derived from the IFAD Strategic Framework 2007-2010;
  - builds incrementally on IFAD's existing assets, processes and partnerships;
  - identifies the specific instruments needed to improve learning and knowledge-sharing at the country programme level;
  - identifies the cultural and behavioural changes needed for implementation and the incentives and training that must be put in place to bring these changes about; and
  - seeks to ensure cost-effectiveness by harnessing resources and efforts and integrating them into a coherent and time-bound results framework.
5. The strategy has four strategic components: strengthening knowledge-sharing and learning processes; equipping IFAD with a more supportive knowledge-sharing and learning infrastructure; fostering partnerships for broader knowledge-sharing and learning; and promoting a supportive knowledge-sharing and learning culture. Most knowledge management measures (country-level activities, regional and thematic networks, strategic partnerships) will be financed under the current country programme financing instruments or regional and global grants. The strategy will, however, require some modest additional costs to finance certain new initiatives.

6. The strategy will be implemented through a clear distribution of roles and responsibilities within IFAD in order to provide for efficiency and accountability.
7. The IFAD knowledge management strategy embraces the following vision:

#### **Knowledge management – vision statement**

IFAD is the only international development institution established exclusively to contribute to reducing poverty and food insecurity in the rural areas of developing countries.

Within the scope of this unique mandate, IFAD will strive to be a learning organization. It will learn systematically and collectively from its own projects and programmes, and from the experience of its partners, particularly poor rural people, in order to deliver high-quality services and to enable its partners to find innovative ways to overcome poverty, and to use the knowledge acquired to foster pro-poor policy reforms. IFAD will share information and knowledge related to rural poverty in order to promote good practice, scale up innovations and influence policies, thus positioning the fight to reduce rural poverty as a global, regional and national priority.

# IFAD Strategy for Knowledge Management

## I. Background

1. Since the 1950s, a central question in international development has been how knowledge can best be generated, mobilized, made available, applied and adapted to improve the human condition. The centrality of knowledge systems to development effectiveness comprised the theme of the World Bank's *World Development Report* of 1998/99. The main argument in that report was that the development of poorer countries necessitated assigning the highest priority to building "knowledge-based economies". Knowledge, as opposed to natural resources, the report stated, had become the most important factor determining standards of living.
2. The report recommended that developing countries should assign high priority to "knowledge strategies". It also urged development agencies such as IFAD to accord greater importance to "knowledge transfer" from richer to poorer countries as follows: "...developing countries need not reinvent the wheel... Rather than re-create existing knowledge, poorer countries have the option of acquiring and adapting much knowledge already available in the richer countries. With communications costs plummeting, transferring knowledge is cheaper than ever. Given these advances, the stage appears to be set for a rapid narrowing of knowledge gaps and a surge in economic growth and human well-being."<sup>1</sup>
3. This formulation met with criticism and scepticism from several quarters, mainly on the grounds that the report had erroneously treated knowledge like a commodity that could simply be packaged and transferred cheaply using new technologies. But the report did inspire many development agencies, including the World Bank itself, to pay greater attention to knowledge management.
4. Five years later, in 2003, an independent evaluation of the World Bank's performance in knowledge management suggested that the original criticisms of the 1998/99 *World Development Report* had been well founded. The evaluation found that: "...the [Bank's] new knowledge-sharing activities and programs have had limited impact on Bank client countries."<sup>2</sup> It concluded further that the Bank's knowledge management efforts were attempting far too much and that for success "...knowledge-sharing has to be embedded in work processes... [and] tightly linked to the Bank's core lending and non-lending tasks."<sup>3</sup>
5. Assessments of the knowledge management performance of other institutions seem to have come to similar conclusions. A recent study that examined five decades of international development efforts in knowledge management concluded that: "...the impact... has been rather limited... [the indicators show that]... most developing countries... did not improve in any significant way during the past half century."<sup>4</sup>
6. Thus, lessons from the experiences of the World Bank and other development agencies underscore the complexities, difficulties and pitfalls of knowledge management strategies for development. IFAD's experience, reflected in the findings of the Independent External Evaluation of IFAD (IEE), has been similar. The IEE

<sup>1</sup> World Bank, *World Development Report: Knowledge for Development* (Washington, D.C., World Bank, Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> World Bank, Operations Evaluation Department, *Sharing Knowledge: Innovations and Remaining Challenges* (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2003), p. xv.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. xiv.

<sup>4</sup> Sagasti, F., *Knowledge and Innovation for Development: The Sisyphus Challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Cheltenham, Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd, 2004), p. 84.

found that IFAD's management of knowledge and innovation was "unsystematic and inadequate given its corporate mission".<sup>5</sup>

7. IFAD has taken this experience into careful account in preparing this knowledge management strategy. It has consulted widely both within and without the organization; conducted a baseline assessment of its current knowledge situation; sought to gather, understand and apply the "lessons learned" from the efforts of other institutions; and sought to obtain and incorporate guidance from its Executive Board.

## **II. Why does IFAD need a knowledge management strategy?**

### **A. The changing global context requires new approaches and new learning**

8. Dramatic changes in the global economy present both new opportunities and new threats to the prospects for rural development and rural poverty reduction. Trade liberalization is opening up market access for some small-scale producers, while for others livelihoods are being lost to the changing market structure of agri-food chains and the rise of supermarkets. The explosion in remittances allows some people to diversify economically and escape from rural poverty, but for others it means social exclusion and community divisiveness. There are new uncertainties for smallholder farmers in the steady advance of biotechnology and the rising demands for biofuels. A recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warns of an imminent crisis for poor farmers in marginal areas as their traditional crops fall victim to climate change. At the same time, knowledge about new and more sustainable natural resource management approaches (for example, conservation agriculture, organic farming) are emerging. The face of rural societies and of rural poverty is also changing as a result of outward migration, the feminization of agriculture, withdrawal of government services and subsidies, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Given these rapid and often dramatic changes, knowledge becomes a vital asset to IFAD for achieving its mandate.

### **B. IFAD's development effectiveness depends on improved knowledge capabilities**

9. IFAD is not primarily a knowledge organization and has few of the defining organizational characteristics of a research institution, a strategic studies centre or a policy institute. Its principal features are those of a technical agency and its core activities, as stipulated in its charter, are to address the needs of rural development by raising finances and applying those finances, through grants and loans, to projects in developing countries within the context of national poverty reduction strategies.
10. In the conduct of its core activities, however, IFAD, like other technical agencies, deals with many types of knowledge. It learns from its clients and partners, and the programmes and projects it supports often generate new knowledge. Moreover, since the late 1980s, IFAD has evolved from simply cofinancing projects identified by other international finance institutions to supporting much more knowledge-intensive and innovation-based programmes aimed at institutional and policy transformation. This has generated a greatly increased need for new types of knowledge in order to address an expanded range, diversity and complexity of factors that will determine IFAD's development effectiveness. The essence of these shifts and new requirements is demand-driven, as more and more recipient governments and field partners

---

<sup>5</sup> Office of Evaluation, IFAD, "An Independent External Evaluation of the International Fund for Agricultural Development" (Rome, IFAD, 2005), p. 6.

emphasize that the value they attach to IFAD will depend increasingly on its ability to strengthen innovation and knowledge-sharing and learning.

11. IFAD will need to obtain and generate new knowledge in order to respond effectively to these pressures and to the rapid and often dramatic changes they produce. Where old ways and methods no longer respond to changed realities on the ground, IFAD will need to seek innovations from others and to generate them with its clients and partners. This means that IFAD must become more agile and must improve its systems and institutional readiness for more continuous learning and sharing. Therefore, it is in the sense of improving its learning from development practice that IFAD will increasingly become a knowledge-based organization.
12. This will not transform IFAD into a policy centre or a research institute, nor will it require structures to be modified. It will, however, require better institutional incentives for learning, enhanced integration and horizontal linkages within the organization, greater investment in carefully targeted networks and, most centrally, improved efforts to "embed learning" in all of its activities from strategy to post-project evaluations. To achieve these objectives and to be able to track and measure its progress towards them, IFAD needs an overall guiding framework. That is the aim of this knowledge management strategy.

### **III. The baseline: Assessing the barriers and challenges to overcome**

13. IFAD deals every day with many types of knowledge. Most is integral to its own work, deriving from interactions with its partner organizations (including rural farmers' and community organizations) and, more broadly, from discourse with scholars, practitioners and international organizations involved in rural development. For the most part, however, this knowledge remains "tacit" – that is to say, it is not systematic, explicit or codified. It is mainly held by individual members of IFAD staff. As a result, acquisition and exchange of knowledge are fragmented. IFAD knowledge is distributed among individuals, projects, countries, regions; and among partner institutions and organizations and instruments (information repositories, networks, working groups) that are not well connected to each other. This means that it is difficult for others – whether within or outside the organization – to locate and access IFAD's learning in cost-effective ways.
14. IFAD has tried to correct this situation in the past. A stated objective of IFAD's Strategic Framework for 1998-2000 and of the IFAD V: Plan of Action (2000-2002) was that IFAD would become a knowledge institution. Among the objectives of IFAD's Strategic Change Programme were: (i) generation and monitoring of a knowledge management strategy; (ii) installation of an organizational infrastructure with specific knowledge management roles and structures; (iii) implementation of processes and tools for staff to collect, store and share knowledge; and (iv) implementation of information technology support. Resulting from this were several initiatives and activities. For example, the Knowledge Management Support and Facilitation Unit was created in 2001 but disbanded in 2002; a knowledge management strategy was drafted but not finalized.
15. A number of critical lessons emerge from an examination of IFAD's previous efforts in knowledge management and provide important guidance for the current effort:
  - Knowledge management initiatives do not succeed when they are merely "bolted to" established activities: careful attention and institutional leadership are required to ensure that knowledge management initiatives are embedded in the organization's work processes and its main delivery instruments (i.e. loans and grants). IFAD's previous knowledge management initiatives tended to involve isolated activities or to be treated as "add on" activities without a clear unity of purpose. Unsurprisingly, efforts became fragmented and poorly integrated, resources thinly distributed and

responsibilities diluted. Knowledge management activities were not planned or implemented with a clear strategic focus and within a coherent sourcing, planning, reporting and results framework.

- A carefully constructed and valued inventory of knowledge assets is essential for improving an institution's capabilities and performance in knowledge management, and this must be the starting point for a knowledge management strategy. Experience in other organizations provides unequivocal proof that it is essential to build on what one has, integrate, learn and make incremental adjustments and improvements. This lesson has been forcefully stated by one analyst as follows: "The main thing to recognize is that getting access to technology is less than half the problem. What happens after that will usually be much more important... *What you get depends on what you've got.*"<sup>6</sup>
- An institutional culture of learning and sharing knowledge requires appropriate human resource policies and practices, including incentives. Inadequate attention was paid to this factor in previous efforts. IFAD's incentive systems do not do enough to encourage collective and systematic learning across countries, regions, business lines and units.
- The roles, responsibilities, competencies and incentives to perform the knowledge management processes and practices need clear, careful and consistent (the three C's) attention and institutional support. IFAD's past efforts attached insufficient importance to these requirements. Unless competencies are clearly identified and related to performance measurement, it will be difficult to foster accountability.

#### **IV. The baseline: An inventory of IFAD's assets**

16. Far from beginning from a low base, IFAD already has a wide range of knowledge assets. Some are more developed and advanced than others. Taken as a whole, however, these furnish the Fund with a strong latent comparative advantage of knowledge about rural development. The challenge is to build on these and to convert them from a latent into an effective comparative advantage. These institutional assets (see appendix I for a more complete review) include the following:

- A wealth of knowledge already exists. It has been accumulated through over 30 years of experience supporting agricultural and rural development and rural poverty reduction. As indicated before, however, most of this is tacit and needs to be systematized to ensure its availability to all as a public good.
- The Fund is more aware than ever before of the importance of enhanced knowledge management for development effectiveness. Staff awareness of this is now reinforced by strong senior management commitment and leadership buy-in.
- Numerous partnerships with acknowledged knowledge centres have been established. Among these are several of the agricultural research centres within the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) system (such as the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas, the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, and the Africa Rice Center) and others (such as the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor, the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development, the Institute of Development Studies, the International

---

<sup>6</sup> Bell, M., "Technology Transfer to Transition Countries: Are There Lessons from the Experience of the Post-War Industrializing Countries?" in D.A. Dyker (ed.), *The Technology of Transition: Science and Technology Policies for Transition Countries* (Budapest, Central European University Press, 1997).

Development and Research Centre, and the United Nations Capital Development Fund). For the most part, however, these partnerships have thus far been on a short-term, single-project basis. The challenge here will be to expand some of the existing relationships into ones that are strategically and systemically aimed at learning and sharing.

- IFAD has committed resources over many years in support of research on rural development (research-for-development grants), regional knowledge networks and specialized knowledge events. To date, these have been essentially “one-off” operations without horizontal linkages, but they furnish valuable foundations on which to build.
- IFAD’s Information Resource Centre holds IFAD’s institutional memory through its archival and records management role. To achieve full potential, however, IFAD needs to ensure that information is properly stored and easily retrieved for knowledge management purposes.
- Information technology platforms – including Internet, Intranet, the recently launched Rural Poverty Portal, corporate Web-enabled workspaces and shared drives – have been improving steadily, but require more strategic alignment to the full range of IFAD operational activities.
- A range of knowledge-based instruments that IFAD has developed and enhanced in recent years – such as the results-based country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP), the reports of implementation support missions, mid-term reviews, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and project completion reports – all furnish valuable platforms for systemic learning and sharing. However, these remain somewhat fragmented; the challenge of a knowledge management strategy is to achieve connectivity among them.
- Independent evaluation, including the annual report on the results and impact of IFAD operations, is a key instrument for distilling and institutionalizing some of the lessons learned while providing for accountability. A major challenge for independent evaluation is to find the right balance between the accountability/control and the learning functions.
- Knowledge events and research publications. IFAD regularly organizes informal and formal meetings around agricultural and rural development issues, with contributions from high-profile scholars and visitors from peer organizations. It also produces publications to share knowledge and research findings, some of which have been widely disseminated and recognized across the development community. These offer important potential but need to be systematized within a broader framework of institutional knowledge management.
- At the policy level, there are an increasing number of corporate policies to guide IFAD Management and staff. Two processes contribute to distilling tacit and explicit knowledge into policies: (i) the IFAD Policy Forum, which furnishes discussion space and can act as a key link between knowledge held by staff and IFAD policy development; and (ii) IFAD policy reference groups (cross-departmental groups to address policy issues).
- At the operational level in IFAD headquarters, there are four main knowledge management mechanisms:
  - Learning Notes – This is a relatively recent and promising initiative to provide concise guidance on the design and implementation of investments in rural development.
  - Project development teams – This is a peer review and knowledge-sharing mechanism to improve project development and, increasingly,

project implementation. The effectiveness of these teams has been constrained by limited interaction to date with field-level partners.

- Thematic groups – To date, groups have been formed on gender, natural resource management and rural finance. These have functioned sporadically and inadequately, but they have considerable potential for enhancing knowledge-sharing and integration within IFAD. To do so, they will need to be planned strategically and scaled up to thematic networks.
- Portfolio reviews – These reviews monitor and self-assess loan and grant portfolios for impact, lessons learned and quality assurance. The grant portfolio review component has not as yet been addressed adequately.
- At the decentralized (regional, country and field) level, initiatives to stimulate knowledge-sharing and learning include the following:
  - A number of important regional networks<sup>7</sup> provide services to share ideas, issues and experience, and improve communication among projects, as well as between IFAD headquarters and other regionally based partner organizations. These networks need to be further strengthened and focused on delivering effective knowledge-sharing services to a larger number of projects and partners, and on fostering learning initiatives (at local or country level) among the partners.
  - The Project Development and Implementation Partnership is a mechanism for field-level stakeholders (including community and farmers' organizations) to discuss key local development issues, exchange experience, steer projects, review lessons learned and guide IFAD country programmes. A variant on this is the Linking Local Learners initiative, which aims to facilitate local learning for small farmers.
  - The Learning Routes Training Programme is a programme with rural associations and peasant organizations in Latin America that aims to share and enhance knowledge accumulated in the implementation of rural development projects.

- 17. Resources for knowledge management.** The following instruments are used to finance activities and processes related to knowledge management: administrative budget; Programme Development Financing Facility (PDFF); and loans, grants and supplementary funds, or a combination of these. The majority of corporate-level activities and processes are financed under the administrative budget or supplementary funds, while activities at the decentralized level (country and regional) are funded by a combination of PDFF, loans, grants and supplementary funds. The resources are distributed among many partners (governments, field partners, grant beneficiary partners and IFAD units) and are not harnessed within one coherent planning, management and results framework. The grant programme is the major source of funding for decentralized knowledge management, including the setting up and running of key knowledge management assets such as the regional networks. The alignment, allocation and management of these resources are constrained by the same factors as the research-for-development programme. On the one hand, they are insufficiently focused on strategic priority knowledge areas, and, on the other, they are allocated on a short-term basis through a project approach. As a result, resources are distributed thinly to finance fragmented ventures without allowing for long-term and sustainable partnerships.

---

<sup>7</sup> For example, FIDAMERICA in the Latin America and the Caribbean region, FIDAFRIQUE in the Western and Central Africa region, the Knowledge Networking for Rural Development in Asia/Pacific Region (ENRAP), and the Knowledge Access in Rural Interconnected Areas Network (KariaNet) in the Near East and North Africa region.

## **V. Moving forward: A framework for IFAD knowledge management**

18. It is clear from the foregoing that IFAD must improve its capabilities for learning and sharing knowledge in order to achieve its larger goal of development effectiveness. An enabling framework or strategy is essential to guide such improvements, but it is also clear that IFAD has many valuable assets on which its strategy can and should be based. It is also clear from IFAD's own experiences and those of others that the key to success in knowledge management is to ensure that all aspects of it are built on and tightly embedded in an organization's work processes and products. A further lesson that can be drawn from experiences elsewhere is that it is far too easy for institutions to get knowledge management wrong. The World Bank's experience illustrates the pitfalls that exist and the difficulty and complexity of knowledge management for development. For an organization such as IFAD, this suggests a strategy based on pragmatism and on selective and sequential steps.
19. The framework that follows has been constructed on this basis. It aims to facilitate progress in knowledge-sharing and learning, both within IFAD and with its partners, via pragmatic (i.e. rooted firmly in IFAD assets), focused, selective and incremental measures. To do so, the framework:
  - locates measures within thematic areas derived from the IFAD Strategic Framework 2007-2010, with a major focus at the country-programme level;
  - focuses on the fundamental changes required to create a more conducive environment;
  - selects a limited number of knowledge themes that build on the most robust existing assets and processes;
  - seeks to ensure cost-effectiveness by harnessing resources and efforts and integrating them into a coherent results framework; and
  - encourages regular monitoring and feedback mechanisms as the process evolves.
20. These strategic components are presented in the following four broad headings: (i) strengthening knowledge-sharing and learning processes; (ii) equipping IFAD with a more supportive knowledge-sharing and learning infrastructure; (iii) fostering partnerships for broader knowledge-sharing and learning; and (iv) promoting a supportive knowledge-sharing and learning culture. It must be admitted that these headings are somewhat arbitrary and that the categories are interdependent and the boundaries between them permeable. Nevertheless, they provide an organizational basis for the presentation of a complex set of factors and planned measures.

### **A. Strengthening knowledge-sharing and learning processes**

#### **Within the country programme cycle**

21. At the country level, three major processes will be strengthened or scaled up to improve impact through knowledge-sharing and learning: (i) the project cycle will be retooled to integrate knowledge management throughout; (ii) a knowledge-based policy development process will be tested; and (iii) specific local learning activities will be scaled up.
22. Within the country programme, articulated through results-based COSOPs, better knowledge management should help improve country programmes by delivering better country programme design, better project design and better implementation support – three key performance indicators in support of development effectiveness targets. Innovation, learning and scaling up together form one of IFAD's six principles of engagement, which apply to all IFAD's country programmes: knowledge management is central to this agenda. In this respect, the COSOP articulates IFAD's knowledge management strategy relative to country-level objectives, and provides a

platform to ensure that knowledge is fed back into corporate-level knowledge management processes. Above all, it will ensure that local knowledge and experience are effectively mobilized in IFAD's country-level policy dialogue, programme implementation and programme development work. Learning and knowledge-sharing will be improved by mainstreaming knowledge management at the country level using the revised framework for results-based COSOPs. Reporting on knowledge management activities will be part of the COSOP review exercise.

23. The other programme cycle activities will be retooled to provide for learning and knowledge-sharing within the project, the country and beyond. Through M&E and supervision, implementation support and mid-term reviews, the lessons learned at the local and programme level will be directly used to improve the effectiveness of the country programme and further distilled and fed into the regional and thematic networks and the Rural Poverty Portal. Systematic dissemination of IFAD's *Guide for Project M&E*, together with stronger support through regional grant programmes – for example, the Programme for Strengthening the Regional Capacity for Monitoring and Evaluation of Rural Poverty Alleviation Projects in Latin America and the Caribbean; the Regional Programme for Strengthening Management for Impact in Eastern and Southern Africa; and the Programme to Support IFAD-funded Projects' Monitoring and Evaluation Systems in Western and Central Africa – will further strengthen M&E as a learning tool. In implementing the new supervision policy, IFAD will take specific measures to draw the lessons learned from supervision missions and codify them in their reports. This will also provide the basis for stimulating, replicating and scaling up innovation through learning and knowledge-sharing. Conversely, the country teams and the design and implementation support missions will make use of Learning Notes and the other knowledge available through the regional and thematic networks to design and implement the country programme along industry and IFAD's best practice. Agreements with cooperating institutions will be revisited to include specific knowledge management requirements. Project completion reports will focus on distilling the major lessons learned, and on the steps taken to mainstream these lessons.
24. The knowledge gained from the various regional and thematic networks will be distilled in Learning Notes to be codified as "best practice". These will be dynamic documents enriched by real-time examples and continuously updated using clear quality standards. Learning Notes will be shared extensively through the regional and thematic learning networks and the Rural Poverty Portal. They will be systematically provided to consultants, cooperating institutions and partners engaged in programme design, supervision or policy dialogue.
25. Strong policy development and policy dialogue processes in the agricultural and rural development sector will be developed based on lessons learned from field experience – especially from IFAD's country programmes – and on sound research on agricultural or rural development issues. These processes will be developed selectively and sequentially in approximately ten countries distributed among five regions, and where there are opportunities for policy and institutional change, including through the poverty reduction strategy programme. One example is the systematization of microfinance good practice in preparing the Ghana microfinance policy under the Rural Financial Services Project cofinanced by the Government of Ghana, IFAD, the International Development Association and the African Development Bank. Processes will comprise research, workshops, field visits and study tours, and will include political leaders, policy analysts and decision-makers, stakeholder organizations (for example, farmers' organizations, microfinance institutions), researchers, consultants, the private sector and other donor agencies.
26. Valuing local knowledge and scaling up local innovations will be carried out in approximately ten countries, distributed among five regions, where innovative mechanisms have already been developed. Examples are local innovation in the Niger, marketing in the United Republic of Tanzania and ethno-botanical knowledge

in the Philippines (see appendix II for a brief account of these). Products aimed at valuing, protecting and sharing local knowledge while stimulating local innovation in areas such as natural and genetic resources, natural resource management, small-scale rural businesses and smallholder agriculture have a high potential in terms of impact. They can become a distinctive product line for IFAD provided the relevant segment of knowledge management is given due consideration and equipped with sufficient resources – especially grants. The learning process will include all stakeholders: IFAD and the country programme teams; farmers' and community organizations; indigenous peoples' organizations; civil society organizations; and the private sector. Building on these experiences and learning from them, and working with relevant thematic networks (such as the one on indigenous peoples), IFAD can develop other, similar knowledge products in various development areas.

### **Regional networks**

27. At the regional level, IFAD intends to invest in learning from the experience of existing grant-financed regional networks by selecting two of these – FIDAMERICA in the Latin America and the Caribbean region, and FIDAFRIQUE in the Western and Central Africa region – for scaling up and further development. The goal will be to harvest, distil and share regional knowledge, including knowledge related to programmes (for example, strategies/approaches, research and development programmes). The networks will provide a foundation for learning, for the measurement and evaluation of the knowledge value and potential of the networks, and for informed judgements on future replications. Linkages with the thematic networks will be strengthened. These regional networks will continue to be financed by grant resources but in a more continuous way to provide for sustainability of services. The Rural Poverty Portal will serve these networks and the links among them.

### **Thematic networks<sup>8</sup>**

28. At the headquarters level, building on the existing thematic groups, IFAD will initially develop two thematic networks, choosing from among the themes of gender, rural finance, natural resources management and indigenous peoples. The networks will serve as laboratories for systematic learning by IFAD on the linking of knowledge development at the local, regional and corporate levels with IFAD's policy. They should better position IFAD to distil knowledge and experience through such processes as best-practice reviews and the IFAD Policy Forum, and share knowledge through Learning Notes and informal knowledge-sharing for use in policy dialogue, programme development and implementation activities. The thematic networks will expand the membership of the thematic groups to relevant staff and to external partners. Facilitation of these networks will be financed by grant resources. IFAD will learn from the experience gained in running these two thematic networks before deciding whether or not to build additional thematic networks.

### **Learning events and publications**

29. Building on existing events, such as policy seminars, round-table conferences during the Governing Council, the Farmers' Forum and the many other intermittent and informal seminars and workshops, IFAD will launch a cycle of seminars in order to provide opportunities to discuss and debate global development issues and their relevance to rural poverty. The seminar cycle will be planned carefully and adequately funded, with lecturers and speakers identified proactively. The proceedings and outcomes will be disseminated through the regional networks and the Rural Poverty Portal. Learning events at country and regional levels will be better and more strategically planned and managed. Their outcomes will be systematically recorded and disseminated through the regional networks and the Rural Poverty Portal.

---

<sup>8</sup> Also called communities of practice.

30. IFAD will also develop a coherent approach to publications, especially at corporate level. A simple typology of knowledge papers will be prepared outlining the various publication lines and their processing and dissemination status. The Thematic Study series will be further rationalized to provide for content and editorial consistency. Learning Notes will be regularly updated and published. Joint publications with knowledge centres and other partner organizations, especially the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP), will be encouraged.

## **B. Equipping IFAD with a more supportive knowledge-sharing and learning infrastructure**

- 31. IFAD will put in place a more supportive infrastructure to achieve its knowledge management objectives in three areas: (i) a stronger information technology platform including the Rural Poverty Portal; (ii) better information management; and (iii) specific knowledge management tools for collaboration.
- 32. IFAD will develop a stronger information technology platform to enable better information management, communication and knowledge-sharing, building on its existing Web-based information, communication and knowledge management tools (Intranet, Internet, the Rural Poverty Portal, Web-enabled workspaces and shared drives). This platform will consist of an integrated set of knowledge-sharing and collaboration tools coupled with open, standards-based, Web content management and portal technology. The platform's knowledge-sharing component will use individual authoring tools and shared repositories to create Web-enabled, shared workspaces across IFAD's Intranet and available to IFAD users irrespective of location. The collaboration component will allow for distributed editing and annotation, revision management, instant messaging, online discussion, Web conferencing and other collaboration services that effectively enable community work. The platform's content management component will allow IFAD to deliver content across websites dynamically. The Portal technology will permit controlled and dynamic access to source information maintained in operational databases and to documents and institutional records stored in shared corporate repositories. This stronger platform will provide the necessary foundation for the cost-effective implementation of virtual workspaces and collaboration networks that bring internal and external communities together into a single virtual IFAD.
- 33. IFAD will also further develop and implement common information management standards, rules, procedures and tools for the collection, control, reuse and sharing of the data and information contained in IFAD's "collective memory". The aim will be to increase organizational efficiency and document business processes, provide evidence of activity and precedents for action, support programme evaluations, inform policymaking and ensure accountability.
- 34. IFAD will be equipped with specific knowledge management tools for collaboration (e.g. collaborative, organizational workspaces), knowledge-sharing and learning (for example, "peer assists"<sup>9</sup>, after-action reviews) and knowledge-capturing and -storing (for example, knowledge-harvesting, sharing of practices, white pages<sup>10</sup>).

## **C. Fostering partnerships for broader knowledge-sharing and learning**

- 35. Building on its many existing partnerships, IFAD will adopt a much more focused and selective approach to partnerships in knowledge management. With a view to systematic learning, IFAD will begin by developing four quite different strategic partnerships in knowledge management with selected partners: one CGIAR centre (the International Food Policy Research Institute), one development agency (the

---

<sup>9</sup> A systematic method to benefit from the insights and experience of peers.

<sup>10</sup> A tool to help people find others in their organization who have the knowledge and expertise they need for a particular task or project.

African Development Bank or the World Bank), a network of stakeholder institutions (for example, NGOs, farmers' organizations, rural microfinance institutions) and tripartite collaboration with FAO and WFP. Designed as long-term collaborative frameworks, these partnerships will harness substantial human and financial resources from IFAD (mainly through the grant programme or supplementary funds) and from strategic partners. The partnerships will specify the thematic areas under consideration, which should be aligned with the knowledge issues IFAD gives priority to as derived from the strategic framework and corporate planning processes. They will be based on a clear results framework outlining the outcomes of the collaboration. Research activities and learning events will be jointly planned. The strategic partnerships should be carefully linked to and supportive of the other IFAD knowledge management processes. While the strategic partnerships will make use of IFAD's knowledge assets, their outcomes should be shared and disseminated through IFAD's other knowledge management processes.

36. With regard to its Rome-based sister organizations, FAO and WFP, the Fund will explore the possibility of establishing a tripartite knowledge and learning network, to enable the three organizations to learn from each other, build on each other's strengths and identify further areas of synergy and possibilities for streamlining.

## **D. Promoting a supportive knowledge-sharing and learning culture**

37. IFAD will upgrade its human resource management and policy instruments in order to establish a stronger knowledge-sharing and learning culture throughout the organization. A wider initiative promoting cultural change within IFAD, soon to be launched under the Action Plan, will provide a coherent framework for addressing IFAD's structural and organizational factors (for example, its "silo" organizational culture<sup>11</sup> and the lack of incentives for collaborative action) that are constraining knowledge-sharing and learning. Institutional culture change of this type can only occur with strong and visible commitment from IFAD's leadership to the values of mutual respect, transparency and accountability. Accordingly, support for appropriate management training will be integral to IFAD's knowledge management strategy. This strategy will focus on the implementation of shorter-term, pragmatic and concrete measures that will contribute significantly to positive cultural change. These include:

- **Proper resourcing of initiatives aimed at breaking the "silo" culture.** IFAD's leadership, as a visible sign of commitment, will ensure that the key knowledge-sharing and learning processes that foster collaborative action, such as the regional and thematic networks and country teams, are implemented and adequately resourced.
- **Updating of job descriptions.** IFAD's job descriptions will include learning and knowledge-sharing objectives and activities. Its evaluation system will specify measures of innovation, learning and knowledge-sharing achievements.
- **Updating of human resource processes to provide for adequate incentives.** Human resource processes will be updated to make contribution to knowledge-sharing and learning an integral part of them. Reform of the incentive system through the Performance Evaluation System (PES) will be carried out as a high priority to ensure that staff contributions to knowledge-sharing and learning are fully recognized. Collective incentive mechanisms will be explored to provide for teamwork and collaborative action. The recruitment process will also be reviewed to include learning and knowledge-sharing competencies, experience, awareness and commitment.

---

<sup>11</sup> A culture that does not provide for horizontal collaboration, which results in limited knowledge-sharing and learning.

- **Developing knowledge management skills and competencies.** IFAD will provide training to ensure that staff at all levels are familiar with knowledge-sharing and learning processes and tools, and with the appropriate behaviours and attitudes. Examples of areas that will be addressed as a priority will be the thematic networks, specific knowledge-sharing and learning tools, and the use of the information technology platform.
- **Implementing a set of visible “quick wins” to provide space for knowledge-sharing and learning.** These may include: creating a rotational programme among units and departments for staff to further their creativity and skills; improving communication of IFAD business to non-operational staff and expanding the staff field immersion programme as a means to improving learning and knowledge-sharing; developing an induction curriculum, training and coaching programme to be offered to newcomers systematically; implementing an exit debriefing for staff to capture tacit knowledge; institutionalizing special awards or rewards for those who make a distinctive contribution to knowledge and innovation in IFAD; launching a scholarship and sabbatical incentive scheme for staff to increase their knowledge on key development issues; and launching a visiting scholar or scientist programme that would bring prominent figures in the development world to IFAD.

## **VI. What are the expected results?**

38. In consideration of the results to be expected from an IFAD knowledge management strategy, it is important to bear in mind that knowledge management is a means to an end and not an end in itself. The objective, of course, is to equip IFAD to fulfil its mission of enabling poor rural people to overcome poverty. The direct outputs of a successful knowledge strategy will be better systems, platforms, instruments and tools (knowledge) to achieve this. The value and contributions of such direct outputs cannot be measured in a two-, three- or four-year period; only over an extended period will the incremental gains in relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability become apparent. This reality is reflected in the results framework table presented in appendix III.

## **VII. What are the expected costs and risks?**

### **A. Cost and financing implications**

39. Most of the above measures involve using existing resources in smarter and more strategic ways, or exploiting opportunities offered by investments that IFAD will have to make anyway, i.e. in upgrading its information technology platform or strengthening its information management systems. Therefore, the incremental administrative costs required for implementing this strategy will be modest. There will, however, be additional costs for activities such as the cycle of seminars, and training, and some of the “quick wins”. In a purely illustrative figure, these costs, to be financed under the administrative budget, could amount to up to US\$500,000 over the 2007-2009 period. Decisions on what incremental costs will be incurred will depend on the success of initial investments, on the availability of resources within the overall Action Plan, and on administrative cost ceilings. This will apply particularly to the nature and pace of the evolution of the Rural Poverty Portal.
40. Most knowledge management activities at country level (e.g. M&E, knowledge-based policy development, local knowledge initiatives) will be financed under the current country programme financing instruments. The regional and thematic learning networks and the strategic partnerships will be supported by regional grants.

## B. Risks and risk mitigation measures

41. The major risks and related mitigation measures are described in the table that follows.

<i>Risk identification</i>	<i>Risk qualification</i>	<i>Risk mitigation measures</i>
<b>Knowledge management loses focus because of too much of it</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowledge management is carried out for its own sake and not for improved effectiveness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Embedding knowledge instruments within the work programmes of IFAD and carefully aligning them with strategic thrusts, processes, results-based management and monitoring of staff performance (PES) will ensure a focus on results</li> </ul>
<b>Knowledge management loses focus because of too little of it or fragmentation of efforts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Insufficient efforts and/or knowledge management processes and activities are managed in a fragmented way leading to a loss of focus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IFAD leadership commits itself to knowledge management and ensures focus, sound management and adequate resources for it</li> <li>Knowledge management processes and activities are solidly managed as one system</li> <li>Measures to build a supportive organizational culture will contribute to building a unity of purpose</li> </ul>
<b>Coordination of efforts is insufficient</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowledge management coordination is ineffective. The strategy is not properly implemented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Management regularly reviews progress and takes remedial action</li> <li>Monitoring is provided by experienced internal and external support</li> </ul>
<b>New information technology platform and knowledge tools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New systems and tools are not developed and/or not available in time</li> <li>Staff are unable to use the new tools and techniques owing to insufficient training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Careful prioritization of tools and selection of well-proven and generic toolsets (e.g. open source tools)</li> <li>Proper training and education</li> </ul>
<b>Human and financial resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Insufficient resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Careful analysis and control of requirements</li> </ul>
<b>Quality and content</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content is poor despite effective processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IFAD quality assurance system includes standards for knowledge management</li> </ul>

## VIII. Who will do what?

### A. Roles and responsibilities

42. The implementation of the knowledge management strategy will require strong and visible leadership from the President of IFAD and the senior management team, and the alignment of incentives to ensure commitment and collaboration across the organization. It will also require strong partnerships within the scope of the country programmes (for example, with governments, organizations of the rural poor, the private sector, knowledge centres) and with regional and global partners. Many of the activities envisaged will strengthen these partnerships.
43. A key question is whether a designated knowledge manager should be engaged to guide, coach, supervise, evaluate and report on implementation of this strategy. There appears to be little objective evidence to guide a decision on this matter. The position of knowledge officer is a recent phenomenon in companies; for instance it has been estimated that the position of chief knowledge officer exists in only about one fifth of the Fortune 500 companies.<sup>12</sup> One of the few in-depth studies suggests that the effectiveness of chief knowledge officers may depend on their coming to the positions from within the organization or having an intimate knowledge of that organization. The same study also cautions that there is a risk that knowledge managers can become proselytizers. It states: "Knowledge management can be interpreted as a religion. It has its well-known disciples and followers. It has recognized dogma not the least of which are the competing mantras of "KM as technology" versus "KM as people". Because of its newness, most knowledge managers are "spreading the gospel" and spending inordinate amounts of time and

<sup>12</sup> Stewart, T. A., "Is This Job Really Necessary", *Fortune* (12 January 1998), pp. 154-155.

energy on the communication/education agendas. Knowledge management is a risk with a huge payoff – if it becomes widely accepted, early advocates will become legendary. If it becomes little more than a fad, these same advocates will be soon forgotten.”<sup>13</sup>

44. Another study,<sup>14</sup> which deals with the value of designated knowledge managers or knowledge management advisors in organizations, concludes that:
- Most chief knowledge managers do not control budgets. This reduces their status within organizations and can greatly limit the effectiveness of their roles.
  - Effectiveness in many organizations requires that the knowledge manager report directly to the chief executive officer and/or that he/she be empowered to take policy decisions.
45. These factors and findings suggest a low probability of significant value added to IFAD if it were to recruit a knowledge manager from outside. But they also suggest that clarity is needed with regard to who will be accountable for the functions listed in paragraph 43. The President will therefore designate a member of his senior management team to have overall responsibility for monitoring and overseeing the implementation of this strategy.
46. To increase the focus of knowledge management and align administrative, management, financial and operational processes, six major complementary functions will need to be integrated: (i) knowledge management; (ii) innovation; (iii) strategic partnership management; (iv) thematic and regional network management; (v) communication; and (vi) the grant process for knowledge management including knowledge generation, learning and knowledge-sharing, and innovation. Integrating these functions will ensure higher organizational consistency and will result in reduced transaction costs, greater efficiency and better institutional effectiveness.

## **B. Articulation between knowledge management and other key institutional processes**

47. **Innovation.** The Fund is implementing the IFAD Initiative for Mainstreaming Innovation. The innovation process operates at different stages: opportunity finding, clarification, development, implementation and measurement. Learning and knowledge-sharing processes feed ideas into the innovation process, while the innovation process feeds innovative solutions into learning and knowledge-sharing processes. The two are integrated and inseparable components of a well-functioning knowledge system. Knowledge-sharing processes are vehicles for replicating and scaling up innovative solutions and integrating solutions in policies and guidelines. Under this strategy, knowledge management processes will contribute to making current knowledge about innovations available to innovators and disseminating essential new knowledge.
48. **Corporate policies and guidance.** Policy involves a higher level of knowledge distillation and use. Ideally, policymaking should unfold in a structured and collective process of knowledge development and exchange, identifying what is important (to achieve objectives) and what works (how the objective can be achieved). This knowledge strategy aims to facilitate linkages between IFAD’s learning and knowledge-sharing processes and its policy development process. Some of the

---

<sup>13</sup> McKeen, J.D. and Staples D.S., “Knowledge Managers: Who They Are and What They Do” (Kingston, Canada, Queen’s School of Business, Queen’s University, December 2001), [http://www.providersedge.com/docs/km\\_articles/Knowledge\\_Managers\\_-\\_Who\\_They\\_Are\\_and\\_What\\_They\\_Do.pdf](http://www.providersedge.com/docs/km_articles/Knowledge_Managers_-_Who_They_Are_and_What_They_Do.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> Laszlo, K.C. and Laszlo, A., “Evolving Knowledge for Development: The Role of Knowledge Management in a Changing World”, *Journal of Knowledge Management* (2002), vol. 6, issue 4, pp. 400-412.

linkages are direct, such as the thematic and regional learning networks that aim to furnish direct support to policy development. Other linkages are more generic, such as the broadly based knowledge supports to IFAD country programmes.

49. **Quality enhancement and assurance.** IFAD is designing a quality support system as part of its Action Plan. This system will aim to provide assessments and timely advice to IFAD on the quality of key processes, products, programmes and systemic issues affecting performance. The strong knowledge-sharing and learning dimensions that this will entail will form a crucial component of IFAD's knowledge management strategy.
50. **Knowledge management and corporate information and communication.** Knowledge management, communication and information are closely linked. Strategies for knowledge management and communication must be implemented in tandem to be effective. A sound communication strategy enables better achievement of goals through effective and efficient sharing of information and knowledge. Planned communication will help ensure that the lessons and other information gathered through knowledge management activities are packaged and disseminated or used in ways that are appropriate to the target audiences and that deliver the highest impact for the resources invested.



## Illustrative inventory of IFAD knowledge assets

1. **Information Resource Centre (IRC).** The IRC holds IFAD's institutional memory through its archival and records management role. To achieve full potential, however, IFAD needs to ensure that information is properly stored and easily retrieved for knowledge management purposes.
2. **Web-based information, communication and knowledge management assets.** These include IFAD Internet, Intranet, the Rural Poverty Portal, corporate Web-enabled workspaces and shared drives. These tools provide access to information about IFAD, its programmes and projects, and how IFAD tackles rural poverty issues. IFAD is putting in place the technical infrastructure and a content management tool to improve its Web-based information management, and communication and knowledge management. Internal systems will be further integrated and made accessible through the IFAD's Web-based communication channel. The Rural Poverty Portal, an Action Plan deliverable, allows IFAD and its partners to acquire, store, disseminate and use knowledge about rural and agricultural development issues and solutions. A first version of the Portal has been successfully implemented and the fully functional version is expected for the fourth quarter of 2007.
3. **Research-for-development grants.** IFAD has committed substantial grant resources (more than US\$500 million) for research-for-development programmes. This is the most important explicit effort by IFAD to generate new knowledge for development. The Independent External Evaluation of IFAD found that "a multiplicity of grant facilities and modalities has led to a loss of focus, lack of strategic orientation and no prioritization." Indeed, the financed programmes are focused more on knowledge-generation with a large number of agencies, including Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) centres. Due to the short-term project approach adopted, most of the partnerships with these agencies have not been institutionalized and lack strategic focus and sustainability. Activities related to knowledge-sharing and learning and to fostering innovation are insufficiently emphasized, and the linkages between grant-financed research and loan-financed development programmes need to be strengthened and aligned with strategic thematic priorities. IFAD needs to improve its grant policy and related processes to further align it with IFAD's strategic priorities and adapt it to the evolving context of debt sustainability.
4. At the policy level, two processes contribute to distilling tacit and explicit knowledge into policies. The IFAD Policy Forum discusses, guides, and builds internal consensus and ownership on, the development of IFAD's policies on rural poverty. It is a key link between knowledge held by staff and IFAD policy development. The IFAD policy reference groups are cross-departmental groups that mobilize in-house and external knowledge to address policy issues of relevance to IFAD, and produce policy papers and briefs.
5. At the operational level in IFAD headquarters, there are four main knowledge management mechanisms:
  - Learning Notes are a relatively recent initiative to provide concise reminders for IFAD country programme managers and consultants of issues and tasks in the design and implementation of investments in rural development. They need to be more regularly updated, and better articulated with policy and quality assurance mechanisms, and used more systematically, especially by supervision missions.
  - Project development teams are the main mechanism at IFAD headquarters for peer review and knowledge-sharing during the project development cycle and, increasingly, during the project implementation cycle. They include staff from

across the organization, and may also involve consultants and staff from the other Rome-based agencies. However, the project development teams are organized to discuss design papers and rarely interact with field-level partners, which can limit their effectiveness.

- Thematic groups – on gender, natural resource management and rural finance – gather IFAD's technical, analytical and operational capacity in the specific area across divisions and departments. The functioning of the thematic groups has been to a large extent sporadic as they are not funded adequately and planned strategically. To be scaled up to thematic networks, they need to: be sourced accordingly; be increased in number; include participation from the policy level; and be better connected with field operations and external knowledge centres.
  - Portfolio reviews serve as a management tool for IFAD to monitor and self-assess its loan and grant portfolio in terms of impact and to draw lessons for future operations' quality assurance, policy development processes and knowledge management. There is a need to develop the grant portfolio review subcomponent further and to integrate the entire process so that it can become a more systematic and effective learning and management tool.
6. At the decentralized (regional, country and field) level, initiatives to stimulate knowledge-sharing and learning include the following:
- Regional networks (FIDAMERICA, FIDAFRIQUE, ENRAP, KariaNet and other regional thematic networks) provide services to share ideas, issues and experience, and improve communication among loan- and grant-financed projects, as well as between IFAD headquarters and other partner organizations within specific regions. They also provide IFAD-financed projects and IFAD partners with electronic conferencing and a large range of information services, including project Web pages and regional workshops that bring together the managers and staff of IFAD-financed programmes to share experience and knowledge. These networks need to be further strengthened and focused on delivering effective knowledge-sharing services to a larger number of projects and partners, and fostering learning initiatives (at local or country level) among the partners.
  - Knowledge management within the country programme cycle. The newly approved results-based country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP) is a knowledge-intense document, containing thematic and operational knowledge. The related guidelines also provide indications on how to articulate knowledge management within the country programmes. Project design, supervision and implementation support missions, together with mid-term reviews and project completion reports, are critical steps for applying knowledge, but are rarely used for sharing it. M&E is the main process for learning in all IFAD-financed projects. Efforts are being made to strengthen this critical mechanism, including dissemination of IFAD's *Managing for Impact in Rural Development – A Guide for Project M&E* and the establishment of a range of grant-financed regional initiatives for capacity-building, such as the Programme for Strengthening the Regional Capacity for Monitoring and Evaluation of Rural Poverty Alleviation Projects in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Regional Programme for Strengthening Management for Impact in Eastern and Southern Africa and the Programme to Support IFAD-funded Projects' Monitoring and Evaluation Systems in Western and Central Africa. Upgrading M&E for proactive portfolio management is a key component of IFAD's new operating model under the Action Plan, drawing on the ongoing Results and Impact Management System initiative.
  - The Project Development and Implementation Partnership (PDIP) is a mechanism allowing field-level stakeholders to discuss key local development issues, exchange experience, steer projects and guide IFAD's country programmes.

Programme partners (community and farmers' organizations, the private sector, government, civil society, researchers and consultants) are identified at design. The design team interacts extensively with them in order to exchange knowledge and build trust and ownership. The PDIP is later upgraded to a programme knowledge-sharing and steering device. It meets regularly to provide feedback on project implementation, share knowledge and lessons learned and provide inputs for programme planning and budgeting.

- Linking Local Learners is an action-based learning programme, targeted at small farmers, local service providers and market intermediaries, as well as at IFAD programme staff and managers. It supports local learning groups, integrating learning-by-doing on the ground with on-line, peer-to-peer exchange of ideas and experience.
  - The Learning Routes Training Programme in Latin America seeks to enhance the knowledge accumulated by rural associations, peasants and organizations implementing and operating rural development projects by systematically identifying successful experiences in this area and organizing and disseminating information on them. It is also seeks to replicate innovative solutions and improve the design of projects through the analysis of policies and best management practices, involving farmers, project designers and public decision-makers.
7. **Independent evaluation.** Independent evaluation promotes learning and accountability for using lessons, principally through the core learning partnership arrangement. The annual report on the results and impact of IFAD operations, which is submitted to the Executive Board, provides a consolidated picture of the results, impact and performance of IFAD projects each year. It is the Office of Evaluation's instrument for reporting on IFAD's effectiveness on the basis of partial project and policy evaluation and performance information. It also distils and institutionalizes lessons learned and provides for accountability. A major challenge for independent evaluation is to find the right balance between the accountability/control and the learning functions. One concern is that people involved in knowledge management may take shortcuts to meet specific performance objectives, thus undermining the reflective learning process. Some evaluation methods may also not give due consideration to the risk factors associated with innovation and the related knowledge management dimension.
8. **Knowledge management events.** IFAD regularly organizes informal and formal meetings on agricultural and rural development issues, with contributions from high-profile scholars and visitors from other organizations (such as FAO, the World Bank and the International Food Policy Research Institute). Events also take place during the Governing Council or at the country and regional levels to share knowledge on issues related to rural poverty. These events need to be more carefully and proactively planned and reported on.
9. **Knowledge and research publications.** IFAD produces publications to share knowledge and research findings, some of which have been widely disseminated and recognized across the development community (e.g. IFAD's *Rural Poverty Report 2001* and the joint IFAD/CGIAR report *Emerging Lessons in Agricultural Microfinance: Selected Case Studies*). A more systematic and strategic approach to planning, approving and disseminating knowledge products is needed to ensure adequate quality and relevance.

**10. Other initiatives.** IFAD staff/divisions are involved in many other knowledge and research activities, including: delivering, on a voluntary basis, lectures on rural development at the Università degli Studi Roma Tre within the scope of a Master of Science degree in international development; hosting visiting scientists from knowledge centres to work on specific issues; taking part in staff exchange programmes with sister agencies; and spending sabbatical leave in residence at research centres or institutions. Such initiatives need to be evaluated, and information on positive experiences disseminated throughout the organization for possible replication.

## **Valuing and stimulating local knowledge to enhance poor rural people's knowledge assets: Some promising examples**

### **The Niger – Stimulating local knowledge to leverage local innovation**

1. Since the late 1990s, IFAD operations in the region of Maradi have focused on valuing local knowledge and stimulating innovation for poverty reduction. Using grant-financed activities as a starter, IFAD has developed a large investment programme, the Project for the Promotion of Local Initiatives for Development in Aguié, based on a new approach to fostering pro-poor innovation in agricultural, social, organizational and economic areas.
2. At the heart of the approach is an action-research-training methodology that aims at creating equal relationships between extension workers, researchers and farmers. It is centred on rural people's own coping strategies, and uncovers and builds on their own innovative ideas. The methodology consists of three steps: (i) identifying and recognizing local innovations; ii) selecting the innovations that are relevant and accessible to poor rural people; and iii) conducting joint trials in which farmers demonstrate their innovations to other farmers, researchers and extension workers while testing ways to improve them and apply them on a wider scale.
3. As a result of the dissemination of these innovations (in agroforestry, soil fertility and local seed management), agricultural production is more stable and smallholders are better able to manage risk. In addition, community organizational capacities have been strengthened with the emergence of dynamic women's groups, better herder/farmer relationships, and village-level M&E committees. Decision-making patterns have changed significantly, with broader inclusion of various socio-economic groups, interests and skills. The enhancement of self-confidence and creativity among farmers is another significant outcome, which has triggered increased mobilization of the communities' own resources. The approach also fosters further knowledge-sharing among neighbouring villages and creates strong synergies between local knowledge and scientific knowledge originating from various knowledge institutions (national agricultural research systems, CGIAR centres, universities).

### **The Philippines – Codifying, protecting and sharing local knowledge**

4. Ethno-botanical knowledge is part of the body of traditional knowledge about how indigenous peoples perceive, manage and use the plants around them. The tribal leadership of the Subanen community in western Mindanao recognized that this knowledge, which is largely oral, was being eroded and risked being lost as indigenous communities confronted dramatic changes in their environment and traditional ways of life. Few plant experts remained in the community, and those who did acknowledged that, compared with previous generations, they knew much less about biodiversity.
5. In 2003-2004, IFAD, the World Agroforestry Centre and other local partners supported a project to document the Subanen community's ethno-botanical knowledge. With the agreement of the local communities, a multidisciplinary, participatory and culturally sensitive research method was employed to tap the knowledge of community plant experts, and the technical expertise used to document the process was transferred to the Subanen community. Community members were involved throughout, in particular to ensure that their rights were protected. As a result, oral knowledge of about 568 plants, representing 70 per cent of plants growing in the ancestral domain, was codified. Digital photographs were stored in a database and a Subanen herbarium was created. Most of the plants have multiple uses, as medicine (62 per cent), food (37 per cent) or construction materials (20 per cent). The team also developed creative ways to protect the community's

intellectual property rights using the principles of prior consent.

6. The project was documented, and the experience was replicated in other communities of the Philippines and shared at an international workshop on traditional knowledge held in Panama in 2005.

### **The United Republic of Tanzania – Local knowledge management and real-time learning**

7. In the United Republic of Tanzania, farmers and others in isolated rural communities are using modern information and communication technologies such as mobile phones, e-mail and the Internet to share local experience and good practice, and to learn from each other about how to build more efficient market chains.
8. The First Mile Project, a collaboration between IFAD, the Government of Switzerland and the Agricultural Marketing Systems Development Programme of the Tanzanian Government, ran from June 2005 to March 2006. The project helped farmer groups use mobile phones for getting real-time market and price information, which allowed them to obtain better prices for their products and substantially boost their incomes. Their experiences were then shared with districts through Linking Local Learners, a methodology, targeted at local learning groups, that combines discussion-based learning with the use of an Internet-based learning platform. The experiences are archived and accessible to all subscribers at [www.linkinglearners.net](http://www.linkinglearners.net).
9. IFAD documented the learning and changes occurring during the life of the First Mile Project, from baseline conditions to project processes, to outcomes and lessons learned. It has communicated and archived evidence of the impact of project activities in ways that are thorough, meaningful and accessible to a wide range of audiences, both inside IFAD and among its partners. The approach used has now been included in IFAD's knowledge management toolkit.
10. First Mile activities, including the Linking Local Learners methodology, are now being mainstreamed in other projects in the United Republic of Tanzania. Together with FAO, IFAD is working to replicate the experience in Kenya and Uganda. The opportunities for further replication across sub-Saharan Africa are enormous.

## Results framework

<i>Expected results</i>	<i>Baseline</i>	<i>Three-year objective</i>
1. Systematic knowledge-sharing and learning within the country programmes. Knowledge gained from implementation shared to improve programme effectiveness and influence policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>COSOPs do not systematically provide for knowledge management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowledge management is mainstreamed in results-based COSOPs as per results-based COSOP guidelines</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design missions do not systematically use Learning Notes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design missions for all programmes systematically use Learning Notes as part of their terms of reference and feed new lessons and insights back into them</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lessons from design and implementation are not systematically captured and shared</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For selected, thematically focused activities (for example, rural finance), lessons are captured through supervision and review reports and key lessons disseminated through Learning Notes, regional and thematic networks and the Rural Poverty Portal</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>M&amp;E does not adequately provide for learning at project level or beyond</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>M&amp;E is strengthened to provide for learning using M&amp;E project guidelines and other tools</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learning Notes are updated irregularly, and are not used systematically in all stages of the project cycle</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learning Notes are regularly updated, and systematically used by design, supervision and policy support missions; feedback on lessons and insights from those missions is incorporated into Learning Notes</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experience from programme implementation is not systematically used to influence policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IFAD in-country policy dialogue is systematically informed by programme experience and sound development research</li> </ul>
2. Initiatives to value and stimulate local knowledge are consolidated and scaled up to inform country programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Various local knowledge initiatives are conducted in isolation and with limited perspective for scaling up</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local knowledge initiatives are further developed and scaled up (for example, Linking Local Learners, indigenous knowledge) in ten country programmes</li> </ul>
3. Established and structured thematic learning networks to share knowledge, connecting internal staff and resources (operations, finance, policy, communications, etc.) to IFAD's partners (country teams, regional networks, knowledge centres, stakeholder organizations, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Three unstructured working groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two structured thematic learning networks (e.g. rural finance, indigenous peoples) are strengthened, aligned with IFAD's strategic priority areas and use the Rural Poverty Portal</li> </ul>
4. Established and structured regional learning networks to share knowledge, including stronger linkages with IFAD country programmes and thematic networks, the Rural Poverty Portal and other partners (practitioners, knowledge centres, stakeholder organizations, intergovernmental organizations, NGOs, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Four regional networks of projects at various levels of maturity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two structured regional learning networks are strengthened (e.g. FIDAMERICA in Latin America and the Caribbean, and FIDAFRIQUE in Western and Central Africa). They are integrated with IFAD's information technology platform and the Rural Poverty Portal, and linked to the thematic networks and other practitioners and networks. They are driven by participants. They provide broader information and knowledge management services.</li> </ul>
5. Rural Poverty Portal building on the thematic and regional networks and supported by IFAD's information technology platform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rural Poverty Portal online, and content and use increasing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rural Poverty Portal continually evolves to meet the learning and sharing needs of IFAD, its partners and the international development community</li> </ul>
6. Learning events are systematically planned and implemented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learning events are intermittent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning of learning events is improved at corporate and regional levels</li> </ul>
7. Knowledge publications are systematically planned, prepared and disseminated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning, production and dissemination of publications is poor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A simple typology of knowledge publications is prepared</li> <li>The process for planning, approval and dissemination of publications is improved</li> </ul>

<i>Expected results</i>	<i>Baseline</i>	<i>Three-year objective</i>
8. Strengthened information technology platform to enable information management, communication and knowledge-sharing and learning at headquarters and regional levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information technology does not fully support sound information management and knowledge-sharing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved information technology platform is implemented, building on existing IFAD Web-based information, communication and knowledge management tools, with integrated set of knowledge-sharing and collaboration tools, open, standards-based, Web content management and portal technology</li> </ul>
9. Improved information management standards, rules, procedures and tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unclear procedures, rules and accountability across IFAD for capture, retrieval and management of information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Common information standards, rules, procedures and tools are developed for increasing organizational efficiency and accountability</li> </ul>
10. Better use of selective strategic partnerships for knowledge-sharing and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnerships are fragmented, short-sighted and not aligned with strategic objectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Three long-term partnerships are established: with a CGIAR centre (for example, the International Food Policy Research Institute); a development organization (for example, the African Development Bank, World Bank); and a network of stakeholder organizations (for example, farmers' organizations, rural microfinance institutions)</li> <li>Better knowledge-sharing with FAO and WFP</li> </ul>
11. Fostering a supportive culture, better integrating knowledge management into human resource processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited reference to knowledge management in job descriptions and at recruitment</li> <li>No training on knowledge management</li> <li>Lack of incentive. No knowledge management-specific monitoring through the PES</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Job descriptions and recruitment and promotion processes are revised to include requirements on knowledge management</li> <li>Generic and specific training provided to staff to develop knowledge management skills and competencies</li> <li>PES is amended to provide for individual and collective incentives for knowledge-sharing and learning, and for monitoring knowledge management competencies</li> </ul>
12. Creating space for knowledge-sharing and learning for staff and partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited space for knowledge-sharing, learning and innovation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Quick wins" are identified and implemented. Examples might include: induction training programme; rotational programme; systematic communication of IFAD business and strategic priorities to non-operational staff; exit debriefing programme at staff separation; reward system for knowledge sharers; and modification of consultants' terms of reference.</li> </ul>

