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IFAD's Country-level Policy Dialogue

EVALUATION SYNTHESIS



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IFAD's Country-Level Policy Dialogue Evaluation Synthesis

Front cover: Bangladesh - Market Infrastructure Development Project in the Charland Regions. Women's group meeting in Bakerganj, Bangladesh. ©IFAD/G.M.B. Akash.

Back cover: Madagascar. Gender Action Learning System Training of staff and beneficiaries, farmers and rural youth. Photo by FORMAPROD (left); Third Global Meeting of the Indigenous Peoples' Forum at IFAD, February 2017.

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Preface

The Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD is pleased to present its evaluation synthesis on IFAD's country-level policy dialogue. The synthesis reviews past evaluations and consolidates findings, draws lessons and identifies explanatory factors for performance and results of policy dialogue. This synthesis provides a methodological contribution to the analysis of policy dialogue at IFAD by using a "theory of change approach".

Why should IFAD be concerned with policy dialogue at the country level? The policy and regulatory environment in a given country can pose constraints to the performance of rural development projects. Policy dialogue can help address these constraints and foster the development results on the ground. Moreover, by improving the policy environment, it is possible to create the conditions to scale up successful development approaches and initiatives to reach a much larger number of poor people. Finally, from a global perspective, "getting the policies right" is also an important contribution to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The synthesis finds that the most prevalent type of policy dialogue supported by IFAD was that of creating spaces for dialogue where farmers' organizations could be represented and interact with other development actors.

In more than half of the evaluations reviewed, there is evidence that IFAD and its development partners made a contribution to change or adjust policies, legislation or procedures at national, regional or local level. A common trait in successful examples of policy dialogue took place when IFAD was able to draw from its project experiences as the basis for its policy advocacy for marginalized groups.

The synthesis also identifies limitations in the capacity and the mechanisms available for IFAD to manage policy dialogue effectively. These include: (i) weak calibration of objectives and resources for policy dialogue, compounded by time constraint for operational staff; (ii) variable skills, interest and incentives to IFAD staff to engage in policy dialogue; and (iii) the under-documentation of policy dialogue activities.

As recommended by this synthesis, it will be important to identify a strategy for policy dialogue in country programmes, with a clearer idea of deliverables, resources, partners involved and analytical work required. IFAD should also devote attention to capacity, incentives and accountability of front-line operational staff for policy dialogue. And, finally, it will be important to better monitor and report on policy dialogue activities, for learning and to preserve institutional memory.

I hope that this evaluation synthesis report will contribute to further the country-level policy dialogue agenda with the aim to leverage the impact of IFAD's financed operations.



Oscar A. Garcia
Director

Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD

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The preparation of this evaluation synthesis report was led by Miguel Torralba, Lead Evaluation Officer, Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE), with contributions from Osvaldo Feinstein, senior consultant; and Luna Montozzi and Jorge Carballo, Evaluation Research Analysts. Karina Persson and Susan Cross, former Evaluation Assistants, and Delphine Bureau, Evaluation Assistant, provided administrative support throughout all phases.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

AfDB	African Development Bank
ARRI	Annual Report on Results and Impact of IFAD Operations
CAPFIDA	IFAD Programme Support Unit
CLE	corporate-level evaluation
COSOP	country strategic opportunities programme
CPE	country programme evaluation
CPM	Country Programme Manager
CPO	Country Programme Officer
FONAF	<i>Foro Nacional sobre Agricultura Familiar</i> National Forum on Smallholder Agriculture
ICO	IFAD country office
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IDRC	International Development Research Center (Canada)
IFI	international financial institution
IOE	Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MERCOSUR	Common Market of the South
NGO	non-governmental organization
PBAS	Performance-based Allocation System
PCR/V	Project Completion Report Validation
PEA	political economy analysis
PMD	Programme Management Department
PNEA	Programme of Credit and Technical Support for Small Producers in Northeast Argentina
PPA	project performance assessment
PPE	project performance evaluation
PRM	Office of Partnership and Resource Mobilization of IFAD
PTA	Policy and Technical Advisory Division (IFAD)
REAF	<i>Reunion Especializada de Agricultura Familiar</i> Specialized Meeting on Family Farming
RSP	Rural Sector Performance

Executive summary

1. **Background.** This evaluation synthesis was approved by the Executive Board of IFAD at its 116th session of December 2015 to address “systemic issues and knowledge gaps in IFAD”. This evaluation synthesis draws on IFAD’s experience, and that of other agencies, providing a comprehensive review.
2. The objectives of this evaluation synthesis are: (i) to draw lessons, highlight good practices and factors of success, and identify risks and potential limitations in IFAD’s engagement in country-level policy dialogue; and (ii) to provide recommendations that can further strengthen the design and implementation of IFAD policies, strategies and operations in connection with country-level policy dialogue in IFAD. This synthesis does not address IFAD’s engagement in regional or global fora. Its focus is on country-level policy dialogue.
3. The time frame covers the period 2010-2015, with particular emphasis after 2013. This special emphasis is related to the presentation to the Executive Board in 2013 of the action plan for country-level policy dialogue, which provided a framework for IFAD-wide involvement in policy dialogue.
4. This synthesis has been focused on evaluation documents that provide valuable insights on policy dialogue at the country level, mainly country programme evaluations (CPEs) and corporate-level evaluations (CLEs). Project evaluations have been selectively included in the synthesis as illustration of good practices.
5. The latest definition of country-level policy dialogue is provided by the Action Plan for Country-level Policy Dialogue: “For IFAD, country-level policy dialogue can be considered as a process to engage, directly and indirectly, with its partner governments and other country-level stakeholders, to influence policy priorities or the design, implementation and assessment of formal institutions (e.g. laws, administrative rules), policies and programmes that shape the economic opportunities for large numbers of rural people to move out of poverty”. Currently at IFAD, use is made of the broader concept of country-level policy engagement, which adds to the above definition the notion of collaboration and the consideration of a range of approaches that IFAD adopts to engage in the policy process.
6. In a 2015 survey conducted by the Policy and Technical Advisory Division among country programme managers (CPMs), when asked what would be most helpful to improve in policy engagement and its effectiveness, the top-highest ranked answer was “relevant examples of policy engagement from IFAD and non-IFAD projects”. This evaluation synthesis provides examples of that kind.
7. Policy dialogue is a key feature in the medium-term plan of IFAD 10 (2016-18). It serves two critical purposes. First, it helps create an enabling environment for project implementation and for achieving project impact. Second, it can contribute to set the conditions for large numbers of rural people to move out of poverty, at a scale that no single project can address. IFAD-supported projects can be a laboratory for learning and accumulating evidence about effective approaches to rural poverty reduction. Proven successful approaches can be scaled up, often at the national level, through policy changes. More broadly, policy dialogue is crucial to further the objectives of the Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals at the country level.
8. The synthesis also reviewed external literature on policy dialogue, including reports and analytical work done by multilateral institutions as well as bilateral agencies in the North and in the South. Common traits emerge and are briefly summarized here:
 - a) The importance of political economy analysis, nurtured through active dialogue with national governments, local governments and stakeholders, to create a platform for policy dialogue.

- b) Long-term perspective and citizen engagement as a form of policy dialogue. The policy dialogue process can take place at many different levels in a society over a long period of time. This also requires an additional line of work going beyond the traditional high-level policy and purely technocratic approach.
- c) A combination of formal and informal dialogue has proven to be effective in many instances. Informal dialogue is difficult to track but its progress and effects need to be monitored.
- d) There is increasing need for staff of development agencies to engage in policy dialogue. However, this is not yet matched by capacity development efforts. Staff have learnt how to conduct policy dialogue through trial and error. Addressing this capacity gap requires a more systematic approach to developing staff competencies and skills.
- e) Monitoring progress on policy dialogue objectives. Reporting can be brief but should refer to what the specific results are, how they were measured, which inputs contributed to them, and what type of policy dialogue approach was used. Over the time, this will help build a body of evidence regarding the most effective approaches.
- f) Distinguishing between adversarial and collaborative discourse, monologues and genuine policy dialogue. Decisions require interactions among stakeholders about facts, values, substance and processes. Such interactions have often taken the form of a monologue rather than a dialogue. In most cases, humility is needed both from policy makers and from those who advise them.

A. Evidence from CPEs

9. **Policy dialogue outputs.** This evaluation synthesis distinguishes country-level policy dialogue activities carried out in connection to programme design and implementation and those undertaken through other corporate processes. Policy dialogue during country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP) as well as project preparation is the most common type (reported in 59 per cent of CPEs). However, 11 per cent of the CPEs show limited or no evidence of policy dialogue. A large majority of the CPEs reviewed (89 per cent) found that the COSOP included policy dialogue objectives. However, only 15 per cent of the total CPEs showed evidence of resource allocation for policy dialogue included in the COSOP.
10. Of the CPEs reviewed, 41 per cent reported that policy dialogue activities were funded through grants whereas 33 per cent through a combination of both project component and grants; and 15 per cent through a project component only. Supporting spaces and platforms for policy dialogue is the most common output produced by IFAD-supported programmes (52 per cent), followed by contribution of CPM/country programme officer (CPO) to sector working groups (41 per cent).
11. As far as enhanced capacity of national stakeholders to participate in national policy processes, most cases include the development of capacity for small farmers' organizations and organizations of the rural poor to participate in policy discussions. IFAD has supported platforms for dialogue on rural development issues (e.g., the "Knowledge for Change grant project" in Latin America and the Caribbean Region). However, there is a deficit in undertaking policy analysis work and technical assistance for policy formulation (found only in one fifth of CPEs reviewed).
12. **Outcomes of policy dialogue.** Close to 40 per cent of the CPEs report on advances in terms of strengthening capacity of government agencies to formulate national policies and programmes through a variety of means, including institutional support, raising awareness and capacity, and in some case the creation of permanent high-level institutions. Slightly more than half (55 per cent) of the CPEs provide evidence of contribution to change or to adjusting policies, legislation and/or procedures at national, regional or local level. Examples of

promotion of pro-poor approaches in policies and legislation can be found in several countries (e.g., Bangladesh, Ecuador, Kenya, Indonesia, Nepal, and Yemen).

13. **Discrepancy between ambition and resources.** The 2012 Annual Report on Results and Impact of IFAD Operations (ARRI) selected policy dialogue at the country level as its learning theme. While there were examples of IFAD's favourable contribution to policy dialogue at the country level, these were by and large episodic and not based on a systematic approach. This was the result of a mismatch between the scale of IFAD's policy ambitions as articulated in country strategies, the challenges of achieving pro-poor policy change, and IFAD's actual capacity, resources and management incentives to contribute to the expected objectives.
14. Four years later, the ARRI 2016 reported that performance in policy dialogue was only moderately satisfactory (54 per cent of CPEs rated moderately satisfactory or better) and there were signs of a declining trend. The 2012 and 2016 ARRI added the following observations: (i) COSOPs specified a large and ambitious agenda for policy dialogue, but without discussing resources and implementation details; (ii) Most of IFAD's focus during implementation was on projects but insufficient effort were made to draw and disseminate lessons from project experiences; (iii) few country and regional grants from IFAD were used to feed into policy dialogue at the country level.

B. Evidence from selected CLEs

15. **The role of grants.** The CLE on the IFAD Policy for grant financing (2014) recognized grants as an essential ingredient that could be used to pilot innovations to be scaled up through loans, or support project design, sector and poverty analysis that would inform policy dialogue. The CLE cited cases of grant support to different forms of policy dialogue. In the Latin America Region, grants had provided support to the Specialized Meeting on Family Farming (*Reunion Especializada de Agricultura Familiar* - REAF) within the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) and supported rural policy dialogue groups in four countries.
16. Grants have also promoted exchanges between project staff and policy-makers in the Near East, North Africa and Europe region, improving awareness among policy makers of important issues concerning smallholder agriculture. Grants helped strengthen regional networks of farmer federations, notably in the regions of East and West Africa. However, this CLE also noted that although COSOPs present opportunities for innovation and policy dialogue, they do not adequately discuss the role that grants could play in supporting the programme.
17. The CLE on the **Performance-based Allocation System (PBAS)** considered the PBAS as a strategic tool that could boost policy dialogue, contributing towards the establishment of an enabling policy and institutional environment. IFAD assesses the policy and institutional environment for reducing rural poverty for every country of operation and summarizes the findings in the rural sector performance score (RSP score, which is included as a policy variable in the PBAS formula). The RSP process, if conducted in a participatory manner with government authorities and other in-country partners, could serve as an entry point to policy dialogue. However, only in few cases had IFAD fully used the COSOP process as an opportunity to promote dialogue around RSP scores.
18. **Decentralization and country presence.** The CLE on IFAD's decentralization experience generated two relevant findings. First, it noticed that IFAD country offices (ICOs), particularly CPM-led ones, had the opportunities to: (i) establish long-term engagement (building relationships, trust and understanding of local priorities and constraints) with national policy-makers; (ii) base suggestions for policy reform on good practices and grounded in project experience; and (iii) participate in sector working groups and engage with all relevant actors. Second, the evaluation recognized that, because of the small size and competing

priorities of ICOs, little ICO staff time could be allocated to policy dialogue (e.g., Bolivia, Ecuador, Kenya, Peru, Philippines).

19. The CLE highlighted how the incorporation of policy dialogue in COSOPs and project design documents was determined by the interests and experience of the CPM and how ICO staff allocate their time to this task. Indeed, there was an important variation in skills and interest among staff members. Turnover of the CPMs and long delays to fulfil vacancies negatively affected policy dialogue. Conversely, leadership provided by the regional directors contributed to giving higher priority to policy dialogue.
20. **Policy elements in the lending activities.** Selected project-level evaluations identified policy components within project packages. The evaluation of the Microfinance for Marginal and Small Farmers Project in Bangladesh (2014) concluded that the project facilitated the mainstreaming of seasonal and agricultural lending to farmers in micro-finance institutions and in their apex organization. The evaluation of the Dom Helder Camara Project in Brazil (2011) observed that the project had established thematic working groups on credit and gender, prompting the larger National Programme for Strengthening Family Agriculture, as well as the Banco do Nordeste to target women and young people through dedicated credit lines.
21. A form of policy discussion has sometimes taken place during supervision and implementation support missions, primarily through discussions held at sector working groups and ad hoc missions. However, during the period considered by the evaluation synthesis, IFAD has not internalized how to conduct an evidence-based policy dialogue with governments on broad rural poverty issues or systemic project implementation issues brought up during the supervision process.

C. Good practices, success factors and challenges

22. The common characteristic in successful examples was that they happened when IFAD was able to draw from project experiences to influence policy making or the design of broader government programmes and when successful experiences from IFAD-funded projects were adopted as the basis for its policy advocacy for marginalized groups.
23. As an example, in India IFAD has built a solid relationship with state-level and central level governments and agencies (e.g., Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand-Chhattisgarh, Orissa and the North East governments), encouraging their intervention in districts with high prevalence of insecurity and accepting to do so in partnership with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations for grass-roots development, with attention to promoting pro-poor innovations. In Nepal, IFAD was one of the pioneers of leasehold forestry, an approach to combining poverty reduction with improved natural resources management. Leasehold forestry is now part of the recognised national policy approaches to forestry.
24. The Government of Argentina and IFAD have conducted policy dialogue on three complementary fronts: (i) regional-level activities funded in the context of MERCOSUR; (ii) policy-level activities of IFAD-funded projects; and (iii) IFAD's direct support to the debate on rural poverty funded by a national grant. This provided a platform for small producers and their organizations to engage in national policy processes on agriculture, including mobilizing technical assistance and identifying market opportunities. It contributed to a debate on rural poverty in Argentina and raised the smallholder agriculture sector's profile in a country that has traditionally been oriented towards large scale agriculture and livestock.
25. The Country Programme Evaluation in Madagascar in 2013 showed evidence of a high-level commitment between the Government of Madagascar and IFAD. Even during a crisis period when dialogue on public policy was considered unfeasible by

some donors, IFAD and the Government analysed project experiences to inform discussion of national reforms (as in the case of land security) and to support the creation of national institutions, such as the National Land Observatory.

26. As noted, presence of country offices offers new opportunities for IFAD's involvement in country-level policy processes. In addition, the preparation of the RSP in the context of the PBAS has the potential to stimulate policy-level discussions, provided that a more systematic and rigorous approach to the RSP preparation is set, involving consultation with local stakeholders. However, this requires time and staff time constraints in country offices (a large part of workload is absorbed by operational issue) are recurrent findings in CPEs.
27. An oft-quoted challenge is the absence of a specific budget for policy dialogue and a clear action plan to be followed in order to achieve the sometimes ambitious goals set in country strategies. In addition, weak monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems and the dearth of quantitative information have made it difficult to demonstrate the effects and impacts of projects at the country level.
28. In some cases, the government's political and institutional instability has proven to be a challenge when engaging in policy dialogue. For example, the CPEs for Ecuador and Yemen illustrate how high turnover among the institutions responsible for implementation, irregular fulfilment in providing counterpart funds, and problems with monitoring and assessing the impact of operations have affected the government's ability to engage in effective dialogue. In some countries, the government's interest in engaging in policy dialogue with IFAD might be insufficient when IFAD is not perceived as a lead partner.
29. Table 1 below synthesize the salient characteristics of IFAD's experience on country-level policy dialogue or engagement, distinguishing between the "traditional practice" (left column), the one that is most often depicted in the available evaluations, and "good practice" (right column) which have been found in some positive cases of IFAD evaluation as well as desirable characteristics and performing practices in the literature. Good practices are understood as complementary, rather than fully replacing traditional ones.

Table 1
Policy dialogue/country-level policy engagement. Traditional and good practices

<i>Traditional practice</i>	<i>Good practice</i>
Informal	Systematic
Opportunistic	Proactive, tailored to outcome sought
Unrecorded	Recorded
Un-resourced	Resourced
Without indicators	With indicators
Without incentives	With incentives
Unclear definitions	Clear definitions
Policy dialogue as a non-lending add-on	Policy dialogue as part of an integrated approach for achieving COSOP strategic objectives
Implicit	Explicit
Invisible	Visible (with deliverables)

Source: interviews, synthesis of evaluations and literature review.

D. Conclusions

30. The evaluation synthesis concludes that IFAD has increased its focus and efforts on policy dialogue and engagement at the country level through its lending and non-lending programmes. Although there have been some remarkable achievements, particularly through grants, there is scope for substantial improvement. Most of the work on country-level policy dialogue and engagement has been informal, reacting to opportunities, unrecorded, un-resourced, with neither indicators nor incentives, with non-lending as an add-on, and without specified deliverables.
31. Given the relatively small financial resources of IFAD, the programmes it supports are meant to be vehicles to achieve broader institutional and policy impact for rural poverty alleviation in its partner countries. Therefore, policy dialogue is an important strategic goal for IFAD. This approach is outlined in various documents and reiterated most recently in the IFAD 2016-2025 Strategic Framework in which policy dialogue is identified as one of the four pillars of IFAD's results delivery.
32. Evidence collected through this evaluation synthesis confirms that policy dialogue is an essential dimension of IFAD's mission as it serves two critical purposes: (i) helping to create an enabling environment for project implementation and for achieving project impact; and (ii) contributing to creating the conditions for large numbers of rural people to move out of poverty, at a scale that no single project can address.
33. As far as the aim to create an enabling environment for project implementation and for achieving project impact, the evaluation synthesis underlines that non-lending activities are increasingly recognized as essential instruments to promote institutional and policy transformation at country and multi-country level and to scale up the impact of IFAD operations for deeper results in rural poverty reduction.
34. A number of CLEs underline that weak synergies both between the investment operations and non-lending activities and among non-lending activities, are constraining the overall impact of IFAD country programmes, and this is linked to limited capacity to undertake adequate analytical work to inform policy dialogue, partnerships, innovation and knowledge management.
35. The evaluation synthesis also notes that while policy dialogue is, by definition, part of the "non-lending activities", there are also some examples of policy dialogue components in selected projects and there may be elements of policy dialogue in project supervision and implementation support activities. Independent evaluations have regarded policy dialogue mainly as a non-lending activity, without considering sufficiently the informal as well as the technical policy elements that take place as part of lending operations (including during design, supervision and implementation support).
36. The report also emphasizes the synergistic relationship among the three non-lending activities, as policy dialogue, knowledge management and partnership-building are mutually reinforcing actions to complement IFAD's investment projects and strengthen programme effectiveness.
37. On scaling up, this synthesis emphasizes policy dialogue as a main driver for creating the conditions for large numbers of rural people to move out of poverty and ultimately contribute to achieve the IFAD 10 target of moving 80 million people out of poverty.
38. There are still limitations in both the capacity and the mechanisms available to manage policy dialogue effectively. These include: (i) under-documentation of informal and technical policy dialogue which remains invisible and risks not finding a foothold in IFAD's country-level institutional memory with the turnover of CPMs and/or CPOs; (ii) absence of policy dialogue indicators at the country level; (iii) limited information available to CPMs and CPOs dialogue experiences, concepts

and tools, and weak incentives for PCMs/CPOs (e.g., through their performance assessment); (iv) time constraints and unclear distribution of roles in country teams concerning policy dialogue.

E. Recommendations

39. The focus of these recommendations is on the learning that can be derived from the review of evaluative evidence. Except the last one, they are addressed to IFAD Management.
40. **Recommendation 1. Strengthen attention to policy dialogue in the COSOPs.** A policy dialogue strategy needs to be identified in the COSOP, designed within the framework of a more programmatic approach, and have clearly identifiable objectives. COSOPs should identify policy dialogue deliverables at the country level (e.g. outputs such as “policy dialogue country notes”, papers on issues to inform policy dialogue) and allocate funds for these activities. Indicators for policy dialogue (at the outputs, intermediate outcomes and outcome levels) should be included in COSOPs and country programmes. Policy dialogue needs to be ultimately seen as an opportunity to broaden the impact of IFAD's programmes and operations.
41. **Recommendation 2. Strengthen the capacity of CPMs and CPOs in connection with policy dialogue.** CPMs and CPOs should be provided with sufficient information and training on how to conduct and document policy dialogue at the country level, complemented with adequate resourcing, including better use of country grants. The forthcoming IFAD guide book for country-level policy engagement prepared by the Policy and Technical Advisory Division is a valuable resource that could be used to inform and train CPMs and CPOs, including in the foreseen “Operational Academy” initiatives. This evaluation synthesis, complemented by the guide book, may be used to promote learning and cross-fertilization of experiences across CPMs, regional divisions and countries. The involvement of CPMs and CPOs in policy dialogue at the country level should be taken into account in the assessment of their performance.
42. **Recommendation 3. Strengthen the monitoring and reporting of policy dialogue activities.** Policy dialogue that takes place during supervision and implementation support, as well as in the design process, needs to be documented, indicating the activities that took place, participants, agreements reached (if any) and/or other results. This will make visible the country-level policy dialogue and engagement and would ensure its preservation in IFAD’s institutional memory. Furthermore, it would provide evidence of the policy dialogue that took place.
43. **Recommendation 4. Revisit and strengthen the approach to assessing policy dialogue at the country level in independent evaluations.** In independent evaluations, the assessment of policy dialogue should refer to those activities that are complementary to the lending portfolio, as well as to those policy analyses and advisory initiatives that are supported through project funding (particularly for those projects that include a policy dialogue component). Evaluations should consider the links between policy engagement and impact on institutions and policies, following the guidance in the 2015 edition of the Evaluation Manual.

IFAD Management's response¹

1. Management welcomes IOE's evaluation synthesis report (ESR) on IFAD's country-level policy engagement. The ESR represents an important effort by IOE to understand IFAD's approach to policy dialogue (or, as IFAD more precisely terms it today, policy engagement); and to analyse its performance in a structured and coherent manner. Management finds that the report is relatively balanced, and that it offers some interesting and nuanced data on outcomes.
2. On the other hand, Management would also like to highlight methodological limitations as a result of which the ESR has not sufficiently recognised the progress that has been made in the last four years to conceptualise and put into practice an IFAD-specific understanding of policy engagement, build in-house capacity for policy engagement, monitor activities and performance, and manage the knowledge that has emerged. While the lessons learned by other development agencies that have been included in report provide interesting insights, a more thorough review of those learned by IFAD would have further enriched the report.
3. While Management believes that the learning opportunity to further strengthen IFAD's policy engagement agenda could have been enhanced had the final report further incorporated Management's comments, it is unquestionably welcomed as a contribution to our learning, around a topic that is increasingly significant to the institution yet inherently complex – from both a conceptual and operational perspective.

Recommendations

4. Management takes note of the four recommendations of the ESR, and in broad terms agrees with all of them. More nuanced responses on each of them follow.
5. **Recommendation 1: Strengthen attention to policy dialogue in the COSOP Agreed.** Management agrees on the need to strengthen attention to policy engagement in the COSOP, and indeed, this has been one of the priorities for the Policy Desk in the Policy and Technical Advisory Division (PTA) since its establishment in 2013. The recently published knowledge product "How-to-Incorporate policy engagement into a COSOP"² gives particular attention to this issue: it offers both concrete suggestions as to how to develop a strategy for policy engagement and specific recommendations as to the various elements that should make it up.

Management fully endorses the statement that "Policy dialogue needs to be ultimately seen as an opportunity to broaden the impact of IFAD's programme and operations in the countries"; and it is precisely for this reason that one of the recommended elements of a strategy for policy engagement is "an identification of the broad thematic areas in which it is expected that IFAD/IFAD-supported projects will pursue a policy agenda under the COSOP, *viewed in terms of their contribution to the achievement of the strategic objectives*".

However, it is also important to recognise that, while the goal of the policy engagement agenda is to contribute to the achievement of the COSOP's strategic objectives, the intrinsic nature of nationally-owned policy processes (involving multiple stakeholders, messy and political) means it is often beyond IFAD's control to influence the higher levels of the policy theory of change. As such, the COSOP can work as an accountability tool for policy engagement at the output level; it usually works less well at outcome and development objective levels.

¹ The final Management response was sent from the Programme Management Department to the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD on 7 June 2017.

² <https://www.ifad.org/documents/10180/8d00110e-c165-4bac-971a-2c8eab7b4a9d>.

6. **Recommendation 2: Strengthen the capacity and incentives of CPMs and CPOs in connection with policy dialogue**

Agreed. As pointed out in the recommendation, the recently published guidebook on policy engagement³ (which is a compendium of four more specific knowledge products) will be of value to CPMs and CPOs in their policy activities, as well as to design team members for COSOPs and projects. The forthcoming “operations academy” will provide an opportunity for broader dissemination of these tools. In addition, training on topics such as partnerships should be linked to that on policy engagement, so as to encourage CPMs and CPOs to work in policy processes with other relevant stakeholders, including development partners.

The involvement of CPMs and CPOs in policy activities is an integral part of their work as the managers of IFAD’s country programmes, and as such it should certainly be taken into account in their performance assessment. Having said this, because the opportunities for policy work vary country by country, and because many factors will influence the success of the activities – including elements often beyond the control of individual staff, *progress* on policy dialogue is not likely to be appropriate as a basis for staff performance assessments.

7. **Recommendation 3: Strengthen the monitoring and reporting of policy dialogue activities**

Agreed. Policy-related activities that take place during supervision and implementation support should be documented. In fact, they often are, through the aide memoires that provide the basis for discussion between the IFAD team and government and the follow-up ‘management letters’ from the directors of the IFADs Regional Divisions to the Borrower. There is no doubt however, that – more broadly – monitoring and evaluation of policy engagement needs to be more systematic; to this effect PTA and OPE are currently working together on a project to facilitate monitoring and reporting of country-level activities and their results. A revision to the methodology of the client survey, which is used as a tool to assess the effectiveness of IFAD’s policy engagement, is also envisioned which is expected to further strengthen monitoring of progress. Furthermore, specific indicators on policy engagement have been included in the revised RIMS framework that will better capture policy engagement in projects with dedicated components for policy.

8. **Recommendation 4: Revisit and strengthen the evaluation approach to assessing policy dialogue at the country level**

Agreed. Management welcomes IOE’s commitment to improve its approach for assessing policy dialogue and, more broadly, policy engagement at country level.

³ <https://www.ifad.org/documents/10180/b360d3a9-e8db-4de4-9af7-babc08075953>.

Nepal - Second Small Farmer Development Project. Meeting of the Small Farmers Cooperative Limited in Anandavan. The rural poor depend primarily on agriculture and related activities for their livelihood.

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IFAD's Country-level Policy Dialogue Evaluation Synthesis

I. Introduction

A. Background

1. Evaluation Syntheses were introduced by the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) after the 2010 Peer Review of IFAD's Office of Evaluation and Evaluation Function. The Peer Review had recommended this new product as a way to further strengthen the use of evaluation findings, learning and feedback loops. Evaluation syntheses are now considered in the Evaluation Policy (2011)¹ and Evaluation Manual of IFAD (2015, second edition).²
2. Evaluation syntheses are different from other IOE evaluation products, as they are prepared primarily to promote learning and collective reflection, and improve IFAD's development effectiveness. Taking stock of findings from previous independent IOE evaluations, they aim to bring together lessons from IFAD evaluations while also capturing evaluation-based lessons from other organizations. It is important to note that Evaluation Syntheses are syntheses of evaluations rather than evaluations.
3. **Rationale.** This Evaluation Synthesis was approved by the Executive Board of IFAD at its 116th session of December 2015, jointly with three other syntheses, to address "systemic issues and knowledge gaps in IFAD".³ In choosing this theme, IOE applied its selectivity framework, considering the following factors: (i) availability of adequate evaluative evidence; (ii) contribution to filling a critical knowledge gap; (iii) strategic priority for IFAD; (iv) timeliness with respect to corporate processes; and (v) serving as a building block for other IOE evaluations. It is worthwhile to note that in a 2015 survey conducted by the Policy and Technical Advisory Division (PTA) among CPMs, when asked what would be most helpful to improve policy engagement and its effectiveness, the top-highest ranked answer was "relevant examples of policy engagement from IFAD and non-IFAD projects", which this synthesis includes in section IV (the critical knowledge gap is also discussed below, in para. 22).
4. The approach paper, which was finalized by early October 2016, presented the objective, scope, key questions, methodology, the outline of the process, and the timeline, team composition and dissemination for this evaluation synthesis.
5. Country-level policy dialogue, and more generally country-level policy engagement, is an important means (rather than an end in itself) through which IFAD can enhance its programmatic approach to contribute to rural poverty reduction beyond the effects of projects supported by the Fund, scaling up its impact.
6. For IFAD, policy engagement at the country level serves two critical purposes. First, it can help to create an enabling environment for project implementation and for achieving project impact. Second, it can contribute to creating the conditions for large numbers of rural people to move out of poverty, at a scale that no single project can address. IFAD-supported projects can provide a laboratory for learning and accumulating evidence about effective approaches to rural poverty reduction, and proven successful approaches can be scaled up, often at the national level,

¹ According to the 2011 Evaluation Policy of IFAD, "evaluation syntheses [...] will identify and capture evaluative knowledge and lessons learned on a certain topic from a variety of evaluations produced by IFAD and the evaluation units of other organizations. These syntheses will be supplemented by lessons from academic literature and targeted interviews to promote learning and the use of evaluation findings":
http://www.ifad.org/evaluation/policy/new_policy.html.

² See the second edition of the IFAD Evaluation Manual:
http://www.ifad.org/evaluation/process_methodology/doc/manual.pdf.

³ See EB 2015/116/R.2 (November 2015), p. 25.

through policy changes. Ultimately, contributing to policy change can help the Organization achieve the IFAD 9 and IFAD 10 target of moving 80 million people out of poverty.⁴

7. In addition, policy engagement at country level is becoming ever-more important for IFAD as both the need and the opportunities for policy engagement are growing. As more IFAD Member States become middle-income countries, they are interested in IFAD's resources and increasingly on the opportunity to learn from IFAD's experience and expertise in rural poverty alleviation around the world. Moreover, IFAD is gaining increasing recognition and is well positioned in many countries, being a respected and trusted partner. The growing number of IFAD country offices offers new opportunities for IFAD to be more involved in country-level policy process.
8. This Evaluation Synthesis draws on IFAD's experience, and that of other agencies, providing a comprehensive review from which it draws a set of conclusions and recommendations to improve IFAD's practice of country-level policy dialogue.
9. **Definition.** The latest definition of what country-level policy dialogue means for IFAD is provided by the information paper *A Plan for Country-level Policy Dialogue*, endorsed by the IFAD Executive Management Committee at its 137th meeting and presented during the 108th Session of the Executive Board (March 2013):⁵ *"For IFAD, country-level policy dialogue can be considered as a process to engage, directly and indirectly, with its partner governments and other country-level stakeholders, to influence policy priorities or the design, implementation and assessment of formal institutions (e.g. laws, administrative rules), policies and programmes that shape the economic opportunities for large numbers of rural people to move out of poverty."*
10. Currently at IFAD, use is made of the broader concept of country-level policy engagement, which adds to the original definition of policy dialogue presented at the Executive Board in 2013 the notion of collaboration and the consideration of a range of approaches that IFAD adopts to engage in the policy process (including, but not limited to, policy dialogue).
11. As clarified in the 2016 Programme Management Department (PMD)-wide review "Country-level policy engagement: a review of experience", the term policy dialogue "has frequently been used to describe IFAD's role in country-level policy processes. A term that suggests a particular approach based on a bilateral relationship between IFAD and the national government, focused on discussing policies and approaches. While such an approach is not excluded, the range of policy-related activities that IFAD either conducts or facilitates is far broader than policy dialogue alone. The term "country-level policy engagement" is thus used to describe the range of approaches that IFAD adopts to collaborate, directly and indirectly, with partner governments and other stakeholders in order to influence the priorities, design, implementation and assessment of national policies that shape the opportunities for large numbers of rural people to move out of poverty" (p. 3).

B. Evolution of thinking

12. The evolution of thinking on country-level policy dialogue at IFAD is presented in Table 1. Although the notion of policy dialogue has always been present in different corporate documents,⁶ a full-fledged definition of policy dialogue has been formulated only in recent years. This might have been related to the fact that the Fund was established primarily as an institution to provide financing for projects

⁴ IFAD's emerging approach to country-level policy engagement. January 2014.

⁵ See EB 2013/108/INF.3 (March 2013), p. 1.

⁶ As an example, the Annual Report 1999, besides recognizing that other international agencies were better positioned to influence macro-economic policy and national poverty alleviation strategies, also acknowledged IFAD's increasing participation in policy dialogue to influence policy in the interests of small-scale producers and the rural poor (p. 14).

designed by other institutions. Indeed, the Agreement Establishing IFAD, as well as the Lending Policies and Criteria, did not allow the Fund to undertake direct supervision, nor to have country presence and, consequently, did not consider any involvement of IFAD in policy dialogue.⁷ The increasing interest in policy dialogue may be associated with IFAD's fundamental shift in its operating model, which in recent years established the Fund as a full-fledged development agency that finances investments projects and programmes, conducts its own supervision,⁸ is involved in policy processes,⁹ and has presence in numerous Member States.

Table 1
Chronology of key IFAD documents of relevance to policy dialogue

<i>Key IFAD documents</i>	<i>Key messages/content</i>
2002-2006 Strategic Framework	<i>"The Fund is well placed to facilitate policy dialogue between grass-roots organizations and national-level decision-makers."</i>
Field Presence Pilot Programme 2004-2007 – Initiative Briefs	<i>"A more permanent field presence would allow IFAD to increase the effectiveness of existing measures and leverage them more successfully in favour of the rural poor."</i>
2006 Supervision and Implementation Support Policy	<i>"Supervision and implementation support [...] facilitate evidence-based policy dialogue."</i>
Strategic Framework 2007-2010	<i>"IFAD has a comparative advantage in capturing the lessons of experience from the projects it finances and using the knowledge as a basis for engagement in dialogue with its member governments."</i>
Results Measurement Framework for the Eighth Replenishment Period 2010-2012	<i>Despite its increasing importance, "policy dialogue continues to remain relatively under-resourced".</i>
2010 ARRI 2010	<i>"Policy dialogue is still limited to the project context and in most countries IFAD still do not manage to engage systematically and successfully at the national policy level".</i>
2011-15 Strategic Framework	Explicitly linked effective policy dialogue to IFAD's core objective of scaling up.
2012 Report of the Consultation on the Ninth Replenishment of IFAD's resources	<i>"More rigorous policy analysis and active engagement in national policy dialogue on agriculture and rural development".</i>
Annual Report on Results and Impact of IFAD Operations 2012	<i>"With an average rating of 3.6, policy dialogue is the lowest-rated aspect of the country programmes."</i>
2013 The Brookings Institution's Institutional Review of IFAD's Scaling-Up Programmes for the Rural Poor	Pointed out the over-ambitious policy agendas defined in the COSOPs.
2013 A Plan for Country-level Policy Dialogue	For the first time, an institutional definition is given of what policy dialogue means for IFAD.
2014 IFAD's Emerging Approach to Country-level Policy Engagement	Why country-level policy engagement. Definition. IFAD's experience to date.
2015 Report of the Consultation on the Tenth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources	<i>Commitment: "100 per cent of COSOPs define a specific approach for country-level policy engagement appropriate to IFAD's programme in each country."</i>
2016 Country-level Policy Engagement in IFAD, a Review of Experience	<i>"In the absence of systematic documentation of these experiences, there has been a gap in knowledge about the scope, successes and limitations of IFAD's country-level policy engagement."</i>

⁷ Since IFAD's basic documents did not provide for a permanent field presence through country offices or representations, during its early years the Fund fulfilled its mandate working solely from its Headquarters through cooperating institutions and through staff and consultant missions to borrowing Member States.

⁸ An amendment to article 7, section 2(g) of the Agreement Establishing IFAD was adopted by the Governing Council at its twenty-ninth session in 2006 to allow IFAD to appoint national, regional or other institutions or entities to undertake supervision, in addition to international cooperating institutions. The Governing Council in the same resolution also amended paragraph 43 of the Lending Policies and Criteria to allow IFAD to, with the authorization of the Executive Board, occasionally supervise project implementation directly.

⁹ "As IFAD shifts its focus from exclusively project-specific goals to making a broader contribution to rural poverty reduction, engaging in country-level policy processes is becoming an increasingly important activity within country programmes, supported by dedicated services and products, and an important mechanism through which to scale up proven approaches and lessons learned at the project level." PMD-wide review "Country-level policy engagement: a review of experience". Introduction, page 2.

Key IFAD documents	Key messages/content
2031-2015 IFAD Medium-Term Plan	<i>New understanding that policy dialogue is part of IFAD's core business, and it needs to be recognized as a distinct activity within the country programme, and supported with a dedicated budget and delivery of products.</i>
2016-2025 Strategic Framework	Policy dialogue is one of the four pillars of IFAD's results delivery.
2017 Country-Level Policy Engagement in IFAD (Guide Book)	Ideas, guidance and tools for more effective policy engagement in the context of IFAD country programmes.

Source: Compiled by IOE.

13. At the beginning of the past decade, the attention was on IFAD's catalytic role and comparative advantage. IFAD's Rural Finance Policy recognized that "as an advocate of the poor, IFAD will participate in policy dialogues aimed at promoting a conducive environment".¹⁰ As well, the Consultation of the 24th Session of the Governing Council urged IFAD "to build on the Fund's comparative advantage by enhancing its policy dialogue and analysis in relevant areas and by sharpening its focus on areas that can act as a catalyst for wider application".¹¹ Also, the **2002-2006 Strategic Framework**, besides recognizing policy dialogue as an important part of the Organization's work, insisted on IFAD's catalytic role as the Fund "is well placed to facilitate policy dialogue between grass-roots organizations and national-level decision-makers".¹²
14. The year 2003 represented an important milestone in the evolution of thinking on policy dialogue. Over the years, donors' increasing interest in national policy dialogue and partnership activities had led to a gradual shift in the focus of IFAD's involvement in policy dialogue: from a *project-based context* (with a focus on project design instead of supervision and implementation due to the constraints derived from the Agreement Establishing IFAD), to a more active engagement *outside* the project context, in order to bring the necessary policy changes and to create a conducive environment to rural poverty reduction and rural development.¹³ But how to enhance IFAD's engagement in policy dialogue, considering the lack of institutional presence in borrowing countries?¹⁴ Discussions on this issue, which started during the consultation on the Fifth Replenishment and continued during the Consultation on the Sixth Replenishment, led to the approval of the **Field presence pilot programme 2004-2007**¹⁵ in the belief that "*a more permanent field presence would allow IFAD to increase the effectiveness of existing measures and leverage them more successfully in favour of the rural poor*".¹⁶
15. In December 2006 the adoption of the **corporate policy on Supervision and Implementation Support**,¹⁷ intertwined with the nearly simultaneous decision to establish an IFAD country presence, represented the most far-reaching change to IFAD's operating model and its history. Additionally, the IOE corporate-level evaluation on IFAD's field presence pilot programme stated that policy dialogue was considered "*one of the areas in which the Field Presence Pilot Initiatives have a significant role in helping IFAD influence policies in favour of the rural poor*".¹⁸ In this way, both documents strongly linked the ability of the Fund to effectively engage in policy dialogue with in-country stakeholders to the issue of its presence on the field and direct supervision and implementation. Both the policy on

¹⁰ IFAD Rural Finance Policy (EB 2000/69/R.12, April 2000), p. 11.

¹¹ Partnerships for eradicating rural poverty report of the consultation to review the adequacy of the resources available to IFAD 2000-2002 (GC 24/L.3, June 2000), p. 24.

¹² Strategic Framework for IFAD 2002-2005 (EB 2001/74/R.36, November 2001), p. 6.

¹³ Annual Report 2003, p.61.

¹⁴ During the consultation on the Fifth Replenishment (2000-2002) the lack of an institutional presence in borrowing countries was already recognized as a constraint to enhancing project impact, undertaking policy dialogue, promoting knowledge management and building partnerships.

¹⁵ See EB 2003/80/INF.7.

¹⁶ See EB 2003/80/R.4, p. 2.

¹⁷ See EB 2006/89/R.4/Rev.1.

¹⁸ Corporate-level evaluation 2007 IFAD's field presence pilot programme, p. 31.

Supervision and Implementation Support and IFAD's decentralization efforts are fully in line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005), in which IFAD recognizes the principle of national ownership of Member States over the development process and IFAD's approach in its contribution to policy processes for further poverty reduction efforts.¹⁹

16. In 2009 the **Results Measurement Framework related to the Eighth Replenishment period (2010-2012)**, besides acknowledging that the impact of IFAD's non-lending instruments such as policy dialogue and knowledge-sharing was increasing, also stated that *"they continue to remain relatively under-resourced"*.²⁰ It also pointed out the difficulties that IFAD was facing in measuring outputs in policy dialogue and in establishing the linkages among diverse levels of results. Similarly, the **Annual Report on Results and Impact of IFAD Operations (ARRI) 2010**, along with recognizing non-lending activities as integral components of country programmes supported by IFAD, noted that policy dialogue was still limited to the project context and in most countries IFAD still did not manage to engage systematically and successfully at the national policy level.²¹ In consideration of these weaknesses, the Fund started working with other international financial institutions (IFIs) to share experiences and strengthen collaboration and mutual learning throughout the Eighth Replenishment period.
17. From that moment onwards, the relevance of policy dialogue has echoed also at corporate level: the **Strategic Framework 2011-2015** recognized policy dialogue as *"part of IFAD's core business"*,²² and an enabling institutional and policy environment for poor rural people as *"one of IFAD's five strategic objectives"*.²³ It also stated that improved policy and regulatory frameworks at the local, national and international levels and strengthened in-country institutional capacities for pro-poor agricultural and rural development were among the key outcomes that IFAD is expected to achieve through policy dialogue and advocacy initiatives. At the same time, the **Report of the Consultation for IFAD9** stated that IFAD was committed to *"more rigorous policy analysis, and active engagement in national policy dialogue on agriculture and rural development"*.²⁴ Supporting policy dialogue was also the learning theme covered in the **ARRI 2012**.²⁵
18. The year 2013 represented another turning point in the evolution of thinking on policy dialogue. The critiques raised by the ARRI 2012 and by the *Brookings Institute Institutional Review of IFAD*²⁶ pointed out the over-ambitious policy agendas defined in the COSOPs due to the narrow focus on project results and to the lack of staff capacity and budget resources in IFAD's operational divisions. They both made a number of suggestions to enable the Fund to intensify its engagement in policy dialogue, which pushed the Fund to take a step forward in shaping its new approach towards policy dialogue. The suggestions included: (i) the need for IFAD to build technical capacity in PTA to deploy in support of specific policy engagements in individual countries; (ii) the need to partner more systematically

¹⁹ "International development organizations are making efforts to improve the effectiveness of aid by supporting national ownership (government, civil society and the private sector), promoting an increased focus on results and improving interagency coordination and harmonization. This agenda was reaffirmed by the heads of development assistance agencies in the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. IFAD is a signatory, and is firmly committed to its implementation". IFAD Strategic Framework 2007-2010, para. 13.

²⁰ See EB 2009/97/R.2, p. 17.

²¹ ARRI 2010, p. 9. It is also worth noting that, for the first time, the ARRI contained a dedicated chapter on non-lending activities.

²² Strategic Framework 2011-2015, p. 24.

²³ Ivi, p. 7.

²⁴ See GC 35/L.4, January 2012, p. 5.

²⁵ The ARRI 2012 found that 50 per cent of country programme evaluations (CPEs) during the period 2007-2012 rated policy dialogue as moderately satisfactory, and just 6 per cent as highly satisfactory. This means that 44 per cent of CPEs rated policy dialogue to be moderately unsatisfactory or worse. Indeed, with an average rating of 3.6, policy dialogue is the lowest-rated aspect of the country programmes (p. 34).

²⁶ A. Hartmann, H. Kharas, R. Kohl, J. Linn, B. Massler and C. Sourang (2010), *Scaling up programmes for the rural poor: IFAD's experience, lessons and prospects* (Phase 2).

with other donor agencies; and (iii) the introduction of policy notes²⁷ as an analytical entry point to an engagement process. Thus, in late 2012, a position of policy advisor was created, and an *Action Plan for Strengthening and Mainstreaming IFAD's Engagement in Country-level Policy Dialogue* was developed and approved by the IFAD Executive Management Committee at the beginning of 2013. The Action Plan for Country-level Policy Dialogue²⁸ provided a framework for IFAD-wide involvement in policy dialogue and represented a milestone for three main reasons: (i) it provided an institutional definition of what policy dialogue means for IFAD; (ii) it urged policy dialogue to be recognized as a distinct activity within the country programme and supported with a dedicated budget and delivery products; and (iii) it stated that policy engagement must be led by the CPMs, as they are in a position to engage directly with governments on policy issues affecting poor rural people.

C. The current operational framework

19. Three years after its endorsement, the Action Plan for Country-level Policy Dialogue still represents the reference document for IFAD's engagement in country-level policy dialogue and, along with additional provisions provided by the Report of the Consultation on the Tenth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources, it shapes what can be considered as the current operational framework for IFAD's engagement in country-level policy dialogue. It should be mentioned that the Rural Sector Performance (RSP) process in the PBAS contributes to country-level policy dialogue, and this process is fundamental to the Organization's current operational framework for country-level policy dialogue (as shown in the 2016 CLE on PBAS).
20. As indicated in paragraphs 10 and 11, at IFAD the term *country-level policy dialogue* is giving way to a broader term: *country-level policy engagement*. This shift can be explained in connection with the fact that both the need and opportunities associated to policy dialogue are evolving (see para 6). New interests are arising from an increasing number of IFAD's Member States that are gaining the status of middle-income country (and, as they do so, their interest in what IFAD can offer them is changing),²⁹ and there are new opportunities for IFAD to be more involved in country-level policy processes due to the growing number of IFAD country offices.³⁰
21. Thus, the range of policy-related activities that IFAD either conducts or facilitates today is broader than the term policy dialogue alone (a term that suggests a particular approach based on a bilateral relationship between IFAD and the national government, focused on discussing policies and approaches);³¹ it also includes policy analysis, strengthening government capacity and operationalizing policy. This is why when describing IFAD's role in country-level policy processes, the terminology "country-level policy engagement" is used, since it includes, but it is not limited to, policy dialogue activities. However, it is worth mentioning that on IFAD's website "policy dialogue" features a prominent role under "who we are".³²

²⁷ The introduction of the policy notes was one of the key elements of the Action Plan. However, they are not systematically used as they are supported on a demand-driven basis, with CPMs apply for funding.

²⁸ See EB 2013/108/INF.3.

²⁹ Indeed, governments are less interested in IFAD's loans and more interested in drawing on IFAD's experience and expertise in rural poverty reduction to develop new approaches that can be integrated into their national programmes. In this regard, support for policy processes is an important service that IFAD can offer them.

³⁰ See GC38/L.4/Rev.1 IFAD10 committed IFAD to "*Establish 10 new country offices to bring the total number to 50, and as required, strategically strengthen staffing, including out-posting of country programme managers, through a budget-neutral approach, in order to support better project design and implementation, policy engagement and impact*" (p. 28).

³¹ 2015 PMD-wide review "Country-level policy engagement: a review of experience".

³² See https://www.ifad.org/what/policy_dialogue/overview.

22. The Action Plan is based on **five key features** that serve to underpin IFAD's approach towards country-level policy engagement.³³ The table below summarizes the key features of the Action Plan:

Table 2

Key features of the Action Plan for Country-level Policy Dialogue

- | |
|--|
| 1. Effectively integrating country-level policy engagement in COSOPs |
| 2. Making resources available for new products |
| 3. Monitoring and measuring results |
| 4. Developing partnerships |
| 5. Building in-house capacity |

Source: Compiled by IOE.

23. First, **effective integration of country-level policy engagement in country programmes**, from design to completion, as a project is not considered an end in itself, but as a starting point for policy engagement and other scaling-up approaches. A strong input in this direction derives from IFAD10, which committed IFAD to ensure that 100 per cent of COSOPs define a specific approach to country-level policy engagement appropriate to IFAD's programme in each country.³⁴
24. Second, **making resources available for new products**, such as country and issue-specific policy analysis that may be useful at any stage of the country programme or project cycle to bring evidence to bear on a policy process. To this end, in 2013 and 2014 PTA was able to access the resources of the Innovation Mainstreaming Initiative supported by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development to carry out policy analysis needed to establish an evidence base for larger processes of policy dialogue, or to support national policy processes.³⁵ In other cases, PTA conducted country-level policy studies using its regular budget.³⁶
25. Third, **monitoring and measuring results**, since both are essential for accountability and learning, as well as for understanding IFAD's contribution to overall development impact. In this regard, the Results Measurement Framework for IFAD10 includes engagement in national policy dialogue as one of the indicators to assess the operational effectiveness of IFAD-supported country programmes and projects. Client surveys remain the main source of information for assessing IFAD's contribution to national policy dialogue and for its support to enable the participation of civil society in policy dialogue.
26. Fourth, **developing partnerships for influence, analysis and learning**. The importance of partnership-building is underlined by the 2016-2025 Strategic Framework, which recognizes partnerships as *"crucial for IFAD to promote synergies among its own and other sources of finance, knowledge and expertise and create more enabling environments for poor people in rural areas to build their pathways out of poverty"*. Additionally, IFAD10 commits IFAD to strengthen its existing partnerships and expand private sector participation in the projects it

³³ See also Country-level policy engagement: opportunity and necessity, 2013 (p. 5).

³⁴ See GC38/L.4/Rev.1 (p. 27).

³⁵ During 2015, thanks to the resources made available by the Innovation Mainstreaming Initiative, PTA carried out seven case studies on activities in the East African community, Cote d'Ivoire, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Mexico and Tajikistan. They illustrate that by using innovative mechanism for policy engagement, large impacts are achievable with few resources.

³⁶ By using its regular budget, PTA also carried out two studies reviewing the policy framework for the dairy sector prior to design missions in Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania; it gave its support for a study on pricing policy for key food products in Ecuador and training for the Ecuadorian government on estimating the costs and benefits of pricing policies; it carried out a review highlighting ways to mainstream policy engagement into the Bangladesh country portfolio; and it conducted a review of the policy and regulatory framework for artisanal fisheries development in Mozambique.

supports through value chain financing and “4Ps” (public-private-producer partnerships) mechanism.³⁷

27. Fifth, **building in-house capacity** through the organization of training, workshops and knowledge-sharing products. In this regard, since 2013 a number of workshops and learning events have been organized to share concepts and exchange experiences and lessons learned.³⁸
28. In addition to the Action Plan, the **Report of the Consultation on the Tenth Replenishment of IFAD’s Resources**, under Section IV – Operational effectiveness and efficiency – states that country-level policy engagement will focus on **four broad objectives**: (i) creating an enabling policy environment for implementing IFAD-supported projects and achieving development impact; (ii) drawing out lessons learned under projects and scaling up successes through integration into national policies, institutions and strategies, thus having an impact which goes far beyond what a single project can do; (iii) strengthening the pro-poor focus of public policies for rural development and their implementation, and the responsible institutions; and (iv) strengthening the capacity of national stakeholders (in particular those who directly represent poor rural people) to participate effectively in policy processes and shape national policies. Under the same section, the report also mentions specific activities that IFAD will undertake to strengthen its country-level policy engagement, such as: policy analysis; supporting local institutions – both government and those of rural civil society; creating policy space and supporting policy processes; and promoting regional and South-South learning and exchange.³⁹
29. To fulfil these four objectives, the Action Plan identified **three main instruments** (or entry points) which are linked and overlapping: (i) IFAD-financed investment projects;⁴⁰ (ii) country-level and regional-level grants programme;⁴¹ and (iii) analysis and related engagement provided by the CPMs and the country programme officers (CPOs) in the country offices. Although most policy-related activities originate from, and are implemented within, investment projects or grants programmes, CPMs and CPOs also undertake activities related to policy engagement that may or may not be mentioned explicitly in COSOPs. In addition to these three main instruments, in response to government requests, IFAD can also conduct policy and analysis work itself, financed through its administrative budget.
30. In 2013, a **country-level policy desk** was established in PTA. The desk supports CPMs and regional divisions to engage more effectively in in-country policy processes. The PTA policy desk prepared a number of policy case studies and organized learning events, which complement other country-level knowledge management products. In 2016, it published a review of IFAD experience in policy engagement;⁴² this review tried to fill a knowledge gap concerning the scope, successes and limitations of IFAD’s country-level policy engagement, but it did not consider the evidence contained in IOE’s evaluations, which is the focus of this

³⁷ Strategic Framework 2016-2025 (p. 20).

³⁸ An example was the workshop “Mainstreaming policy dialogue: from vision to action”, held in October 2013: it was the first event of its kind in IFAD and was intended to make a substantive contribution to IFAD’s evolving agenda for country-level policy engagement. Another example was the learning event “Assessing the impact of policy engagement”, co-hosted by IFAD and Latin American Centre for Rural Development (RIMISP) in June 2015. The event was designed to present IFAD’s recent work on policy engagement and learn from partners how to best monitor and evaluate policy engagement.

³⁹ See GC38/L.4/Rev.1, p. 12.

⁴⁰ The activities that IFAD finances through its investment projects include: strengthening the capacity of government agencies to formulate, implement and lead national policies and programmes, as well as enhancing the capacity of farmers’ organizations (FOs) to participate effectively in them; creating and promoting policy dialogue between different national stakeholders, such as governments, FOs and the private sector; supporting policy analysis as part of national-led policy processes; and operationalizing a national policy, strategy or programme at local level.

⁴¹ Both regional and country-specific grants contain objectives related to policy engagement; most grants focused on policy are aimed at fostering dialogue, producing research/analysis on policy, and assisting rural organizations in advocating for policies.

⁴² Country-level policy engagement in IFAD. A review of experience. IFAD 2016.

Evaluation Synthesis on Policy Dialogue (thus complementing the 2016 review).⁴³
The PTA policy desk is working on a Toolkit on Country-level Policy Engagement,
which could use the evidence provided by this Evaluation Synthesis.⁴⁴

⁴³ Finally, to show as clearly as possible the relation between country-level policy dialogue and country-level policy engagement, the following formula may be useful: $CLPE = PD + PA + SGC + OP$, where CLPE stands for country-level policy engagement, PD for country-level policy dialogue, PA for policy analysis, SGC for strengthening government capacity and OP for operationalizing policy (see above para. 16). Although the focus of this synthesis is policy dialogue, other dimensions of CLPE are also considered as shown in annex III. Furthermore, it is also convenient to distinguish between “technical” and “high-level” policy dialogue, as well as among “micro”, “meso” and “macro” policy dialogue; this avoids the bias to focus only on “high-level” policy dialogue, neglecting other types of policy dialogue which are important and that may contribute to the achievement of the country’s and IFAD’s objectives.

⁴⁴ It should be noted that country level policy dialogue is important in furthering the objectives of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs at the county level. Furthermore, country level policy dialogue is a key feature in the IFAD10 2016-1018 MTP, which includes specific targets for country-level policy dialogue.

II. Evaluation objectives, scope, methodology and process

31. This Evaluation Synthesis aims to address the knowledge gap with respect to evaluative evidence on country-level policy dialogue on pro-poor policies, drawing lessons from evaluations that may feed into IFAD's future work on country-level policy dialogue.

A. Objectives

32. The objectives of this evaluation synthesis are: (i) to draw lessons, highlight good practices and factors of success, and identify risks and potential limitations in IFAD's engagement in country-level policy dialogue; and (ii) to provide recommendations that can further strengthen the design and implementation of IFAD policies, strategies and operations in connection to country-level policy dialogue in IFAD. Recommendations will be formulated at a strategic level.
33. The main audience of this evaluation synthesis will be IFAD Management and operational staff and the Governing Bodies of IFAD. The report may be of interest to international development evaluators and development practitioners as well.

B. Scope

34. **Time frame.** The time frame covers the period 2010-2015, with particular emphasis after 2013. The Strategic Framework 2011-2015 recognized policy dialogue for the first time as "*part of IFAD's core business*", and an enabling institutional and policy environment for poor rural people as "*one of IFAD's five strategic objectives*". The special emphasis after 2013 is related to the presentation to the Executive Board in 2013 of the Action Plan for Country-level Policy Dialogue, which provided a framework for IFAD-wide involvement in policy dialogue, including an institutional definition.
35. **What the evaluation synthesis on policy dialogue will not do.** This synthesis will not address IFAD's engagement in regional or global fora. Its focus is on country-level policy dialogue. Furthermore, although it is an evaluation product, it is not an evaluation but an evaluation synthesis.
36. **Criteria.** According to the second edition of the Evaluation Manual (2015), the analysis in a synthesis report is expected to use four evaluation criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, without rating these criteria.
37. The Manual also indicates that other criteria could be considered. Although it may seem appropriate to include "rural poverty impact", given the way in which policy changes induced by policy dialogue could generate impact, this would not be practical because during the preparatory stage of this synthesis no evaluation was found that provides evidence concerning rural poverty impacts of country-level policy dialogue.
38. **Key questions.** A set of key questions guiding the evaluation can be linked to the criteria and to the theory of change, which, stripped to its essentials, is presented in figure 1.⁴⁵

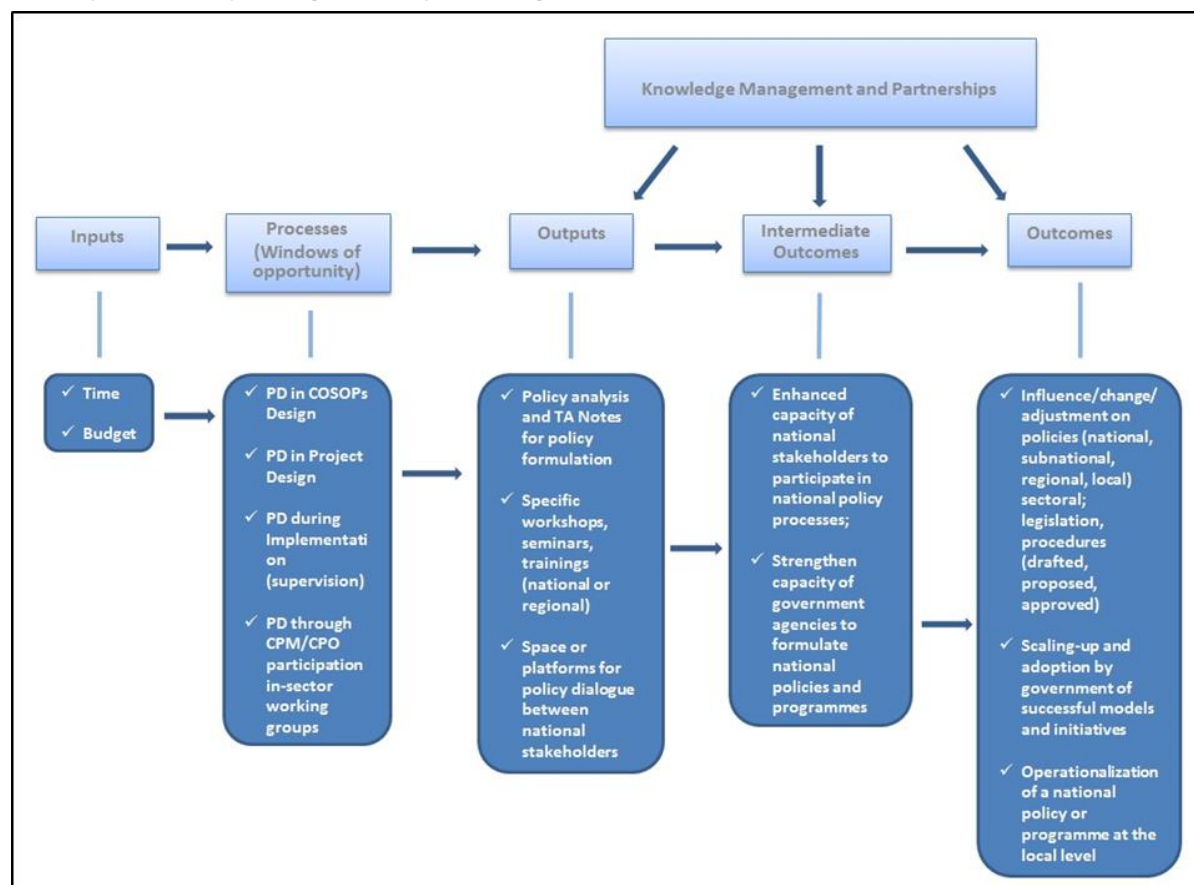
Figure 1
Country-Level Policy Dialogue Theory of Change (core)

<p>Resources From IFAD Grants/loans → Country-level Policy Dialogue → Policy Change → Pro-Poor Results</p>

⁴⁵ "Policy change" could include changes to the manner in which policies are implemented, or changes to the types of evidence used when undertaking policy making, or changes to the ways that policy results are achieved – for instance by building the capacity of and creating the space for local stakeholder organizations themselves (through IFAD loans or grants) to engage in policy processes. For the broad concept of policy change, see Corduneanu-Huci *et.al.* (2013).

39. The full-fledged theory of change (figure 2) shows the results chain and makes explicit the role of IFAD knowledge management and partnerships, which are crucial to generate outputs, intermediate outcomes and outcomes in synergy with country-level policy dialogue (as indicated in paras. 15 and 17).⁴⁶

Figure 2
Country-level Policy Dialogue Theory of Change (full)



Source: IOE

40. It is convenient to distinguish between different levels of policy dialogue, either "technical" or "high-level" policy dialogue, as well as among "micro", "meso" and "macro" policy dialogue; this prevents the bias of focusing only on "high-level" policy dialogue, and neglecting other types of policy dialogue that are important and that may contribute to the achievement of the country's and IFAD's objectives

Key questions: Relevance

- (i) Why is country-level policy dialogue relevant for IFAD?
- (ii) What were the expected results of policy dialogue (e.g. policy change, changes in the "rules of the game", scaling up)? → *linked to the relevance of the design*
- (iii) What has been the theory of change for policy dialogue, and has there been more than one? How was policy dialogue supposed to generate changes? What were the key assumptions? → *linked to the relevance of the design*

⁴⁶ For the sake of clarity, figure 2 is not comprehensive. As pointed out by Management in comments to an earlier version of the Approach Paper, in the box titled "processes", direct participation of IFAD staff is not limited to sector working groups. With regards to "outputs", other aspects which could be included (to the extent that they led to outputs) could be cross-cutting work on institutional strengthening, monitoring and evaluation (M&E)/knowledge sharing, and policy implementation. Along those lines, the "intermediate outcomes" section could also include better implementation and better M&E of policies.

Key questions: Effectiveness

- (i) What were the actual results (outputs, outcomes) of policy dialogue? → *linked to effectiveness*
 - What is the evidence of policy dialogue results?
 - What worked, in which contexts, and why? Examples
- (ii) Are there lessons learned from IFAD's country engagement in policy dialogue?

Key questions: Efficiency

- (i) Which are the lessons on modalities of policy dialogue that were cost-efficient? → linked to efficiency

Key questions: Sustainability

- (i) Which are the lessons on policy dialogue with sustainable results → *linked to sustainability*
- (ii) Which are other lessons learned that may be useful for IFAD's future country-level policy dialogue

Heuristic questions:⁴⁷

- (i) How was policy dialogue defined in IFAD evaluations? How is it currently understood at IFAD?
- (ii) Which indicators, if any, were used for policy dialogue? For inputs, processes, outputs, outcomes?
- (iii) Which key IFAD document address policy dialogue? Do they make reference(s) to evaluation?
- (iv) Who participated in policy dialogue?
- (v) What were the issues on which the policy dialogue took place? In which areas (e.g. agriculture, rural finance, pro-poor policies)?
- (vi) Were there any tools used for policy dialogue?
- (vii) Were resources earmarked for policy dialogue?

C. Methodology

41. The methodology for this Evaluation Synthesis combined methods that are consistent with those indicated in IFAD's Evaluation Manual and within a framework based on the triad "context, interventions and results".⁴⁸ The methods were:
 - (i) A review of the literature on the evaluation of country-level policy dialogue, to identify relevant examples of interventions in different contexts; the questions in annex II and the theory of change (figures 1 and 2) are used as a guide for this review and also for the set of methodological activities described in this paragraph. The literature review also includes recent work that focuses on relevant political economy issues that are crucial for policy dialogue;
 - (ii) A review of IOE's CPEs and CLEs, focusing on all CPEs (27), ARRIIs (6) and CLEs (10) published since 2010⁴⁹ (to include three years before the critical change on country-level policy dialogue, as per table 1); a Boolean table (annex IV) is be used to indicate the availability of evidence, or lack of it, for the different components of the theory of change;
 - (iii) A comparative analysis of county-level policy dialogue interventions or practices;
 - (iv) Dyadic interviews⁵⁰ with IFAD Management and staff, complementing the information from interviews on country-level policy dialogue conducted in

⁴⁷ These heuristic questions have the purpose of focusing attention on aspects which, although not directly related to the evaluation criteria, are important for this Evaluation Synthesis.

⁴⁸ See Better Evaluation (2014).

⁴⁹ The independent evaluations (CPEs and CLEs in particular) used as a basis for the synthesis were not all informed by a documented methodology for assessing policy dialogue by IOE.

⁵⁰ See Morgan *et.al.* (2016).

2015 (an initial interview with IFAD's PTA focal points for country-level policy dialogue, including policy dialogue, took place before preparing the report); and

- (v) Synthesized findings/lessons learned, taking into account different contexts (by region, type of country, and other categories to be developed during the synthesis), using the theory of change presented in annex V so as to maximize the learning value-added of the Evaluation Synthesis.
42. Although it is unlikely that project evaluations will provide significant information on country-level policy dialogue (as the limited information captured under "institutions and policies" does not allow policy dialogue to be disentangled from other elements), the Evaluation Synthesis also considers all project performance assessments (PPAs) and project completion report validations (PCRVs) whose rating for "institutions and policies" impact domain is 4 or more, and which correspond to CPEs since 2010 with a rating for policy dialogue of 4 or more (10 PPAs and 5 PCRVs).

D. Process

43. The main steps in the Evaluation Synthesis process include: (i) peer review, discussion and finalization of the approach paper; (ii) desk review of all relevant documentation; (iii) interviews with managers and relevant staff and with external key informants; (iv) analysis of data and information, using the Boolean table (annex III) and non-parametric distribution-free statistics; (v) triangulation of findings; (vi) preparation of the report, including quality review; and (vii) feedback from IFAD Management and staff during a workshop dedicated to emerging findings.
44. The approach paper was subjected to a peer review in IOE and submitted to IFAD's Management for comments; it was finalized taking those comments into account.
45. The desk review is one of the key sources of data and information and has been conducted along the main guiding lines explained above and in annexes. Interviews were held, individually and in groups, with IFAD staff.
46. The people interviewed at IFAD included: (i) Associate Vice Presidents of PMD and Strategy and Knowledge Department; (ii) front office of PMD; (iii) Director and selected lead technical advisors in PTA; (iv) representatives from each of the five PMD Regional divisions (nominated by their respective Directors) as well as selected CPMs; (v) Director of Global Engagement, within the Strategy and Knowledge Department; (vi) Director, Office of Partnership and Resource Mobilization (PRM); (vii) and Director, Deputy Director and selected staff in IOE.⁵¹ Furthermore, during his participation at the Asian Evaluation Week, which was attended by evaluators and policy-makers from all regions, the IOE senior consultant for this ES (who was invited by the Independent Evaluation Group of the World Bank) used the opportunity to interview IFI and United Nations evaluators as well as policy-makers, to expand the range of views concerning effective and efficient policy dialogue modalities so as to increase the value-added of the synthesis.
47. Based on the evidence captured through the desk review, data analysis and interviews and following the methodology outlined in the previous section, IOE prepared this draft final report, which will be subject to a peer review process within IOE.
48. Based on the comments received, IOE will revise the draft and share it with IFAD Management for comments. After receiving comments from Management, IOE will finalize the report and produce an audit trail illustrating how these were considered. The final report and audit trail will be shared with IFAD Management

⁵¹ See list of people met in annex VI.

for information. Thereafter, IFAD Management will prepare a written response (two-three pages) on the final Evaluation Synthesis report, which will be included in the final report.

49. All final Evaluation Synthesis reports, together with the written IFAD Management's response, are discussed by the Evaluation Committee. Upon request of the Evaluation Committee, the reports may also be discussed by the Executive Board. This Evaluation Synthesis will be presented to the Evaluation Committee in July 2017.
50. **Risks and limitations.** The main risk is that there may be a misunderstanding concerning what the Evaluation Synthesis attempts to do, which can lead to unfulfilled expectations. To mitigate this risk, the approach paper explicitly stated that an Evaluation Synthesis is not an evaluation (nor an evaluation with more limited resources) and focuses on harvesting and synthesizing evidence that has already been gathered rather than to generate new evidence. Other limitations are related to the limited evidence from IOE evaluations, as country-level political dialogue has not been central in the design and implementation of IFAD interventions and has not been addressed in detail in CPEs or in project or grant evaluations – with few exceptions, which the synthesis tried to identify. Another risk is that these exceptions are not fully identified and what was done to cope with this risk is to search in the data and text bases, taking into account ratings whenever available to identify cases of good practice. Also during the interviews questions were asked to further identify relevant cases and to assess the quality of evidence, triangulating documentation review with key informants' views.
51. Last but not least, given that time and resources for an evaluation synthesis are limited, this synthesis has been focused on evaluation documents that are more likely to provide valuable insights, mainly CPEs and CLEs, considering only project evaluations corresponding to cases of good practice.

III. Lessons learned from other agencies on policy dialogue

52. A review of the policy dialogue literature and the experience of other agencies was conducted for this Evaluation Synthesis in order to harvest lessons learned which are potentially useful for IFAD. Additional information from the literature review is presented in annex V.
53. **Disseminating knowledge products to facilitate policy dialogue.** The World Bank's Country Assistance Evaluation Retrospective pointed out that although analytical and advisory activities can be an effective vehicle for engaging governments in policy dialogue and informing civil society, in many cases the attention paid to the dissemination of knowledge products has been inadequate.
54. **Political economy analysis to create a platform for policy dialogue.** Another lesson presented in the Retrospective is that more active dialogue with national governments, local governments and stakeholders enhances the Bank's understanding of political economy considerations. This is particularly interesting in light of recent World Bank work: a 2016 evaluation of the role of political economy analysis (PEA) in development policy operations⁵² concluded that the lack of PEA to support politically sensitive and difficult actions tend to reduce the effectiveness of operations. Furthermore, it indicated that a platform for policy dialogue can be created through PEA, which opens space for policy dialogue. A World Bank handbook⁵³ prepared in 2013 shows how to apply political economy in practice to understand and promote policy change.⁵⁴ An earlier publication from the World Bank⁵⁵ published in 2008 uses a political economy approach in the context of policy dialogue.
55. **Citizen engagement as a form of policy dialogue.** A new line of work related to policy dialogue that the World Bank recently started is on citizen engagement,⁵⁶ going beyond the traditional approach to high-level policy dialogue. Based on research evidence that moving out of a situation of systemic and persistent governance problems is likely to require the disciplining effects of political engagement and the use of transparency policies to make engagement healthy, the Bank acknowledges the need to go beyond a purely technocratic approach. This would be a departure from practices that focused exclusively on high-level policy dialogue to persuade leaders to adopt changes, with no role for political engagement by citizens.
56. **Importance of reorienting managerial and staff incentives to learning.** A recent assessment of the World Bank experience concludes with the statement that "The challenge for the Bank today is to assure that knowledge drives lending and aid, rather than simply serving them when called upon. This requires a quite fundamental change in the Bank's culture such that managerial and staff incentives are reoriented from lending to learning."⁵⁷ Chapter 4 of this Evaluation Synthesis shows that to some extent this also applies to IFAD's experience on policy dialogue at the country level.

⁵² Independent Evaluation Group (2016). *The Role of Political Economy Analysis in Development Policy Operations*. The World Bank.

⁵³ Corduneanu-Huci *et al.* (2013).

⁵⁴ This handbook can be complemented with Fritz *et al.* (2014) *Problem-Driven Political Economy Analysis: The World Bank's Experience*. The World Bank.

⁵⁵ World Bank (2008) *The Political Economy of Policy Reform: Issues and Implications for Policy Dialogue and Development Operations*, Washington D.C.

⁵⁶ Khemani, Stuti *et al.* (2016). Making Politics Work for Development: Harnessing Transparency and Citizen Engagement. World Bank; Devarajan, S. & Khemani, S. (2016). If Politics is the Problem, How Can External Actors be Part of the Solution? Policy Research Working Paper, World Bank Group. See also GAO (2016). Open Innovation: Practices to Engage Citizens and Effectively Implement Federal Initiatives; and IEO (2016). Evaluation of the Global Environment Facility – Civil Society Organization Network.

⁵⁷ Ravallion (2016).

57. **Monitoring progress on policy dialogue objectives.** A review of Swedish experience recommends that reports should include a section that explicitly covers progress on policy dialogue objectives. It can be brief but should refer to what the specific results are, how they were measured, which inputs contributed to them, and what type of policy dialogue approach was used. Over time, this will help build a body of evidence regarding the most effective approaches to achieving results through policy dialogue. The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) should develop generic policy dialogue results indicators to assist in the development of results strategies and related monitoring plans. These would focus on results indicators for the priority thematic sectors, as well as results related to the different types and purposes of policy dialogue. These indicators would also need to cover how to measure the kinds of results possible through policy dialogue processes, and should be accompanied by guidance on how to collect the related data and how to adapt them to measure country-specific policy dialogue outputs, outcomes and impacts.
58. **Combining formal and informal policy dialogue.** A combination of formal and informal policy dialogue proved to be effective in the case of Swedish cooperation. However, as informal dialogue is not generally documented, it is difficult to track or assess the effectiveness of specific informal dialogue actions. What constitutes informal dialogue, when and how to use it most strategically, and how to document or measure its effectiveness still need to be defined and discussed in more depth. Formal dialogue requires stakeholders to articulate an official position to which they can be held accountable, and informal dialogue is critical for following up on such commitments to ensure that there is a common understanding of what has been agreed, and for discussing the next steps to be taken and what kind of additional support, if any, is required. The effect of informal dialogue also needs to be monitored and tracked. Furthermore, policy dialogue support processes, such as related research and training on specific policy dialogue issues, were an essential means of awareness-raising and increasing knowledge. Policy dialogue is important because it puts a topic on the agenda, and different actors can have the opportunity to express their opinion about it, eventually leading to a change in attitudes and behaviour.
59. **Use of complementary approaches.** Policy dialogue and programme/project support can be mutually reinforcing, but special care needs to be taken to ensure that they actually complement each other and work towards systemic change as part of a coherent and conscious plan.
60. **Capacity, expertise and other human resources issues.** With the focus on aid effectiveness within development co-operation, there is increasing need for country staff to engage in policy dialogue. This need is not yet matched by capacity development efforts. This means that staff have primarily had to learn how to conduct policy dialogue through trial and error on the job. Addressing this capacity gap requires a more systematic approach to developing staff competencies and skills related to policy dialogue strategies and the most effective ways to combine them with complementary programmes and dialogue support processes.
61. **Monitoring progress on policy dialogue.** Without any indicators and monitoring tools at hand, successes and experience cannot be catalogued to the extent required, nor can they be adequately shared (lessons learned). This is an especially important issue for policy dialogue. Indicators also need to be realistic and measure a range of immediate, intermediate and long-term results. To develop these indicators, it is also necessary to go beyond stating policy dialogue objectives to outlining specific results anticipated. There is also a need for indicators and processes to measure the effects of informal dialogue.
62. **Long-term perspective.** Policy dialogue should be dealt with as a process that can take place at many different levels in society over a long period of time. This

long-term perspective means that Swedish Sida's approach to policy dialogue needs to be phased with policy dialogue plans establishing long-term objectives and also analysing the stepping stones to reach those objectives that can be achieved through policy dialogue within the timeframe of a typical country strategy.

63. **Policy dialogue as participatory process.** Policy dialogue needs to allow for broad participation, and the views of different stakeholders must be taken seriously. For a policy to be "owned" by society, and thereby be implementable, diverse stakeholders need to be involved and have the opportunity to weigh and to voice the positive and negative potential effects of the new policy. The dialogue can then be regarded as successful if the issues, concerns and interests of these actors are reflected in the final policy document. Policy dialogue can also foster donor co-ordination.
64. **Monitoring and evaluation of policy influence.**⁵⁸ Collecting, monitoring target audiences, making judgements about level of influence (and so on) are time-consuming and tricky activities, while staff carrying out policy-influencing activities tend to already be overstretched and under-resourced. Therefore it is crucial to ensure that any effort spent carrying out this M&E is time well spent. Any systems developed should ensure that information collected can have multiple uses (e.g. for decision-making and, later, reporting) and that it is integrated with, and draws on, any information or knowledge produced during the planning stage of a project. It is important to develop some kind of theory of change as early as possible in the planning stage of an influencing project. This sets the overall framework for M&E, giving teams a way to categorize and make sense of available information throughout the project, and a basis for more in-depth studies by external evaluators during or after the intervention. Recording observations from meetings and negotiations is a useful and low-cost activity. This could be done simply by storing emails, minutes of meetings or back-to-office reports, or using meeting observation checklists to record how particular issues are covered, or how different actors behaved. For a slightly more in-depth analysis, an "after action review" (a tool designed to help teams come together to reflect on a task, activity or project in an open and honest manner) could be carried out with the project team to discuss what happened, why, and what can be learned.
65. **Public-private dialogue.** The "Mesas Ejecutivas" were introduced in Peru as an instrument for organizing the public-private dialogue to identify problems and propose solutions.⁵⁹ It is a policy innovation that emphasizes experimentation, learning and improvements over time.
66. **Policy dialogue requires information to flow both ways.** The widespread linear model to influence policy through research (which predominates in IFIs that use the Analytical and Advisory Activities approach), assumes that if relevant knowledge is generated then it will be applied. However, as pointed out by Carden (2009)⁶⁰ "information needs to flow both ways. Important as it is for researchers/CPMs to speak to policymakers, it is just as important for researchers/CPMs to listen. This is the dialogue in which attentive researchers/PCMs hear policy-makers' questions in their own words(...) understanding the policy problem as the policy-maker sees it, then crafting a research-based answer in similar terms, speeds communication and influence". Otherwise, it is unlikely that the knowledge products will support an effective policy dialogue.

⁵⁸ Jones, H. (2011). *A guide to monitoring and evaluating policy influence* <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/6453.pdf>.

⁵⁹ Ministerio de la Producción Perú (2016).

<http://www2.law.columbia.edu/sabel/papers/LIBRO%20MESAS%20EJECUTIVAS%20English%20version.pdf>.

⁶⁰ Carden, Fred (2009) *Knowledge to Policy*, IDRC. This book is a source of important insights on knowledge communication and on developing policy-makers' capacities at the country level, based on IDRC's experience.

67. **Distinguishing between adversarial and collaborative discourse, monologues and genuine policy dialogue.** Tuler (2000)⁶¹ provides a broader context for the argument made in the previous paragraph. He points out that many issues require decisions or agreements among competing stakeholders who discuss, argue and deliberate about a variety of matters, including facts, values, substance and processes. Often such discussions, decisions or agreements remain elusive because the process of decision making becomes adversarial. While policy deliberations can be instrumental in character, they have also been viewed as potentially enabling new understandings and inclusive agreements to develop. Two ways of talking in policy deliberations are defined: monologic and dialogic. These are forms of discourse which correspond to the distinction between adversarial and collaborative ways of talking, respectively. It should be noted that whereas the latter can be considered genuine policy dialogue, the former is a sort of pseudo-policy dialogue, more related to policy conditionality, which is sometimes presented as policy dialogue but is actually a monologue.
68. **Need for humility in policy dialogue.** The type of monologue mentioned at the end of the preceding paragraph, characteristic of policy conditionality, is particularly inappropriate given the complexity of the political and economic system. A number of policymakers have come to "accept that they, and particularly those who advise them, have to exhibit a little more humility", Kirman (2016).

Tuler, S. (2000). "Forms of talk in policy dialogue: distinguishing between adversarial and collaborative discourse" *Journal of Risk Research*, Vol. 3.1.

IV. Main findings from IFAD's experience with country-level policy dialogue

69. This chapter is based mainly on the evidence from all the CPEs prepared by IOE between 2010 and October 2016. It also takes into account the evidence related to country-level policy dialogue from all CLEs, as well as those available from grants for country-level policy dialogue. Finally, it also considers a set of project evaluations corresponding to those countries for which the CPEs had a rating of 4 or above.

A. Types of country-level policy dialogue activities

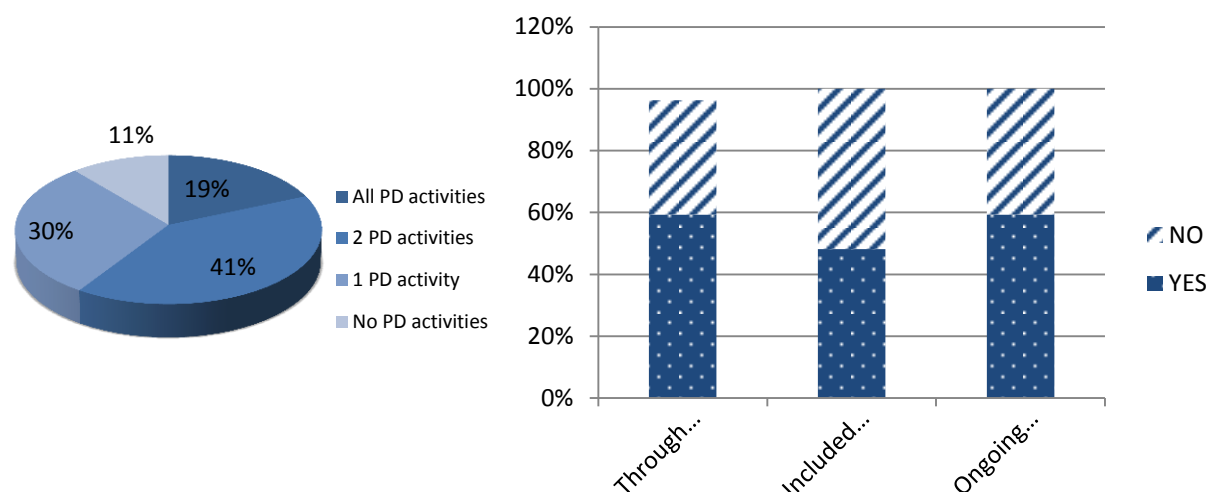
70. The Evaluation Synthesis distinguishes country-level policy dialogue activities carried out in connection with programme design and implementation, and those undertaken through other corporate processes, such as the PBAS.
71. Three categories of policy dialogue activities in connection to programme design and implementation have been considered:
- (i) Policy dialogue during COSOP and project preparation;
 - (ii) Policy dialogue included as specific project component; and
 - (iii) Policy dialogue during implementation/supervision/completion.
72. The first category was the most common type (59 per cent). The second and third categories were both observed in 48 per cent of the cases. The majority of the CPEs (60 per cent) showed evidence of countries participating in two or more categories of policy dialogue, whereas 19 per cent of the countries showed participation in all three activities (Ecuador, Senegal, Nigeria, Zambia, Yemen) and 30 per cent with participation in only one activity.
73. Yemen provides a good example of policy dialogue during COSOP and project preparation. The COSOPs in Yemen were developed following wide consultation with the local stakeholders and partners, and ownership by the Government has been ensured in most cases, including through active interaction with the Yemeni Parliament. Yemen's 2000 and 2007 COSOPs recognize policy dialogue as an important component of IFAD's programme in the country, and this has been reflected in the portfolio. For example, the Pilot Community-Based Rural Infrastructure Project for Highland Areas Project has specific institutional and policy objectives aimed at ensuring that a community-led approach to village access road improvement is enshrined in the overall framework for rural road network development. Specific resources have been provided to support policy dialogue.
74. In Ecuador, policy dialogue with the Government intensified with preparation of the COSOP in 2003-2004 and during design and implementation of several projects. For example, during discussions in connection to the Ibarra-San Lorenzo Development Project and the Development of the Central Corridor Project the Government and IFAD identified territorial development as the central thrust of policy dialogue. Through the "*Programa del Buen Vivir en territorios rurales*", the Fund is actively supporting the process of implementing legal and institutional reforms and related to food sovereignty.
75. Moreover, an institutional strengthening component is present in all projects of the portfolio, aimed at seeking to achieve the "political, legal and physical space that the rural poor need in order to have access to more social and economic opportunities". The Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian Peoples Development Project in particular had a strong policy dialogue component. In addition to loans, the programme has benefited from a grant supporting a platform for policy dialogue that has proven to be effective.⁶²

⁶² Vosti *et al.* (2015), which also shows that the IFAD grant was combined with a grant from IDRC.

76. In contrast, 11 per cent of the country evaluations (Niger, Rwanda and United Republic of Tanzania) showed limited or no evidence of policy dialogue in any of the three types of activities. (see figure 3)

Figure 3

Engagement in policy dialogue activities (in percentage; CPEs 2010-2016)



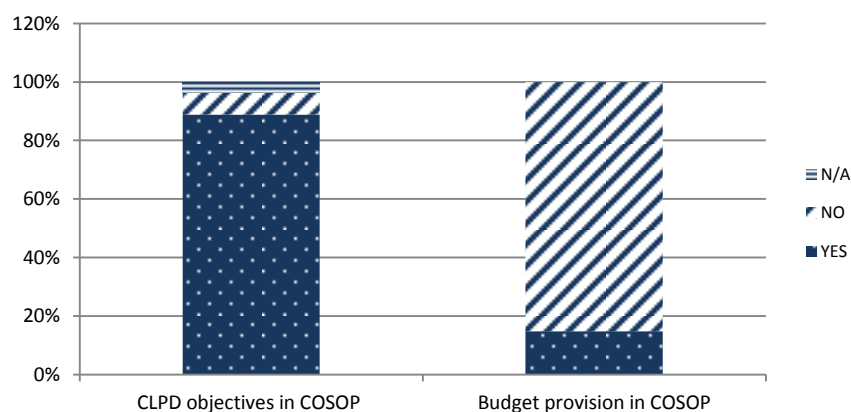
77. As far as country-level policy dialogue during corporate processes, the RSP scoring process undertaken within the PBAS, if conducted in a participatory manner with government authorities and other in-country partners, may serve as a useful opportunity for policy dialogue. In several cases IFAD has fully used the COSOP process as an opportunity to promote dialogue around RSP scores.⁶³

B. Country-level policy dialogue objectives and/or budget provision in the COSOPs

78. A large majority of the countries included in this Evaluation Synthesis (89 per cent) had included policy dialogue objectives in their COSOP (figure 4). However, despite the attention dedicated to policy dialogue as an objective, only 15 per cent of the total CPEs showed evidence of budget figures included in the COSOP. In one case, Rwanda, the 2002 COSOP and 2007 results-based COSOP identified areas for policy dialogue, but no action plans were prepared.
79. Out of 27 CPEs, **only three of them** (Brazil Madagascar and Uganda) **presented evidence of budget figures in addition to explicit policy dialogue objectives**. The Uganda 2004 COSOP provided clear statements on the establishment of a country office for engagement in policy dialogue and donor coordination, and it proposed a budget (US\$4 million) "in support of country presence and advocacy on core issues confronting the poor".

⁶³ See further analysis on PBAS as a strategic tool to boost policy dialogue, on the section on findings from CLEs later in the report.

Figure 4
Presence of country-level objectives and/or budget provision in the COSOPs (in percentage; CPEs 2010-2016)



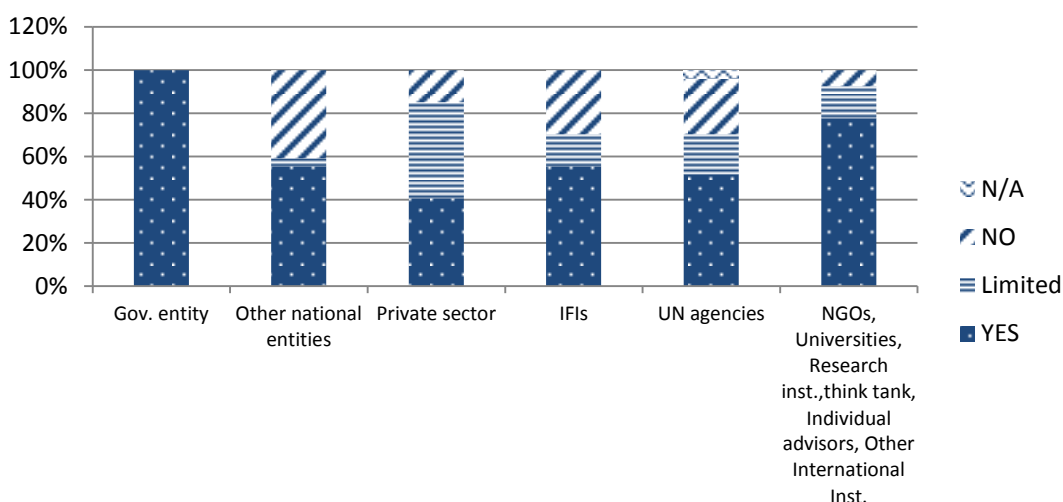
80. In Brazil's 1997 COSOP, one of the major strategic objectives was on policy dialogue ("Assist the Government in shifting from welfare-oriented, highly subsidized anti-poverty programmes to economic-oriented development"). Also in the 2008 COSOP, one of the four major objectives was "to deepen the discussion on rural poverty reduction and family farming policies at the national and international levels." Between 2010 and 2014, IFAD allocated around US\$34,000 per year in policy dialogue to Brazil, which is equivalent to 8.5 per cent of its administrative budget.
81. In Madagascar the programme has devoted resources to non-lending activities and management of the COSOP since late 1990s. In agreement with IFAD, the Ministry of Agriculture created the IFAD Programme Support Unit (CAPFIDA) with the objective to not only support the portfolio, but to also monitor the COSOP, partnership development and policy dialogue. Each quarter, one of the four active projects is responsible for the CAPFIDA budget, using IFAD loans funds; this represents an example of investment in strategic support and non-lending activities.
82. Rwanda was the only case in which neither policy dialogue objectives were described nor a budget included. However, it should be noted, as shown below in section D, para. 86, that there are a variety of sources used to finance policy-related activities

C. Partners having a role in policy dialogue

83. The main IFAD partners identified by the CPEs that are covered by the Evaluation Synthesis are the government (100 per cent of the cases) and the private sector (85 per cent) (although in half of the cases engagement of private sector is only limited) (figure 5). A total of 56 per cent of the cases show engagement in policy dialogue with other national entities. IFIs and United Nations agencies are mentioned as partners in 56 per cent and 52 per cent, respectively
84. The grant "Knowledge for Change in Rural Poverty and Development", in partnership with Canada's International Development Research Center (IDRC), is worth mentioning as an important effort to support a multi-country partnership for policy dialogue in Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico. It will be further discussed in this chapter.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ PTA (2016) provides a useful comparison of the approach followed by this grant with that of the Specialized Meeting on Family Farming (REAF). Evaluative information on this experience is in Vosti *et.al.* (2015).

Figure 5
Partners having a role in policy dialogue (in percentage; CPEs 2010-2016)

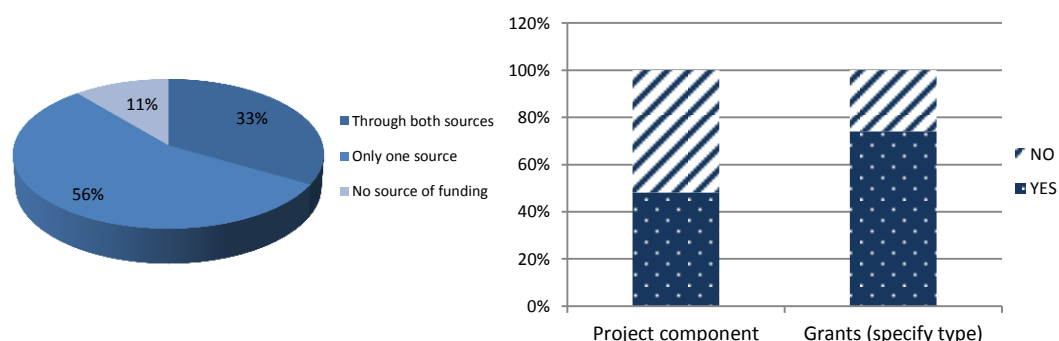


85. From the Asia and the Pacific region, China and Viet Nam stand out for having a variety of partners on policy dialogue. One of the most important partnerships with the Government of Viet Nam that IFAD has developed in recent years is with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. In 2010, two workshops were held focused on discussing a policy for developing farmers’ organizations. Also provincial entities have taken part in policy dialogue through the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, an example of policy dialogue involving the private sector.

D. Source of funds for policy dialogue

86. Close to half (41 per cent) of the countries included in the analysis funded policy dialogue activities through grants, which are particularly recognized in evaluations as an essential ingredient to support poverty analysis that would inform policy dialogue (see section F). One third (33 per cent) funded policy dialogue through both project component and grants, and 15 per cent through a project component (see section G).

Figure 6
Source of funds for policy dialogue (in percentage; CPEs 2010-2016)



E. Results of country-level policy dialogue

1. Annual Report on Results and Impact of IFAD Operations (ARRI)

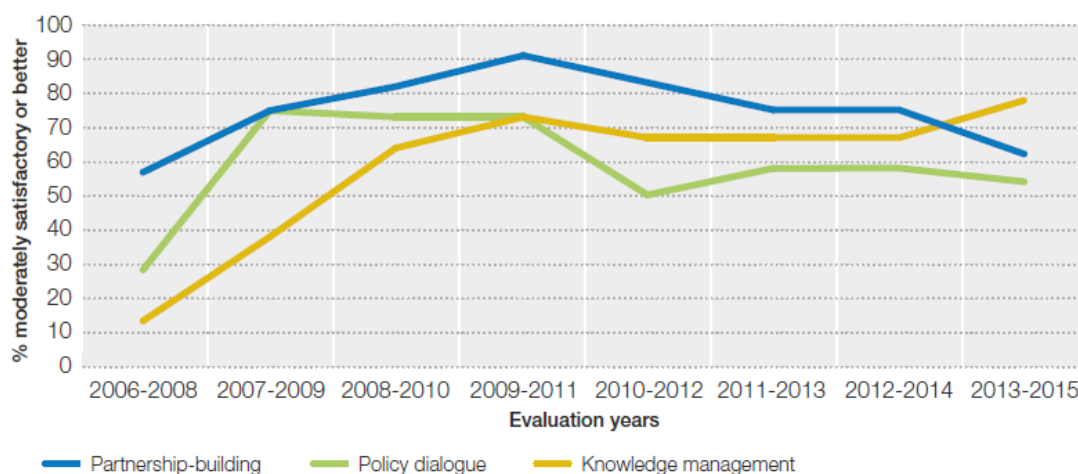
87. The ARRI reports on the performance of non-lending activities, including policy dialogue. Each ARRI identifies a key learning theme. The ARRI 2012 selected as its learning theme policy dialogue at the country level.
88. Findings from the ARRI 2012 reveal that while there are some examples of **IFAD’s favourable contribution to policy dialogue at the country level, they are by and large episodic and not based on a systematic approach.** Improving

IFAD's effectiveness in engaging with policy, and in supporting others (e.g. farmers' groups) to engage effectively with policy, will often be critical to scaling up the impact of IFAD-supported initiatives. That IFAD has not been more successful in this area is the result of a **mismatch between the scale of IFAD's policy ambitions as articulated in country strategies, the challenges of achieving pro-poor policy change, and IFAD's capacity, resources and management incentives to deliver that change**. Greater realism and focus regarding IFAD's ambitions, and clearer incentives and managerial accountability, are likely to be key to greater success in this area.

89. The ARRI 2016 acknowledges that policy dialogue, knowledge management and partnership-building are mutually reinforcing actions to complement IFAD's investment projects. They are increasingly recognized as essential instruments to promote institutional and policy transformation at country level and to scale up the impact of IFAD operations for deeper results in rural poverty reduction.
90. The ARRI 2016 reports that performance in policy dialogue is only moderately satisfactory (54 per cent of CPEs rated moderately satisfactory or better) and has declined over the last three ARRI (see figure 7: performance was below the target of 70 per cent set in the IFAD9 Results Management Framework for policy dialogue).

Figure 7

Evolution of ratings of non-lending activities (2006-2015). Per cent moderately satisfactory or better



91. The ARRI 2016 (reporting on 2015 CPEs) reflected on five key factors that enhance IFAD's capacity to improve engagement in non-lending activities (which include policy dialogue):
 - (i) A more systematic allocation of resources, accompanied by realistic agendas defined in the COSOP and backed by clear and appropriately documented roadmaps for implementation. This would pave the way to a more meaningful and structured role for IFAD in policy dialogue and partnership.
 - (ii) A reinforced IFAD country presence together with an out-posted CPM, which positively contributes to better knowledge management and enhances IFAD's brand, visibility and capacity for national policy dialogue and partnership-building.
 - (iii) A more programmatic approach, including more systematic donor coordination, and the development of strategies at the country level with a clear agenda, which would enable the establishment of stronger partnerships at the strategic level and better policy dialogue and cofinancing.

- (iv) The RSP process, if conducted in a participatory manner with government authorities and other in-country partners, may serve as a useful opportunity for policy dialogue.⁶⁵
 - (v) Grants, which have a special value for supporting policy dialogue.⁶⁶
92. The CPEs covered by these ARRIs provide a variety of reasons for the low ratings of policy dialogue, including ambitious agendas, limited resources, too much focus on projects, and weak knowledge management (see box 1 below).

Box 1

ARRI 2012 and 2016: Reasons for low policy dialogue ratings

- i) COSOPs invariably specified a large and ambitious agenda for policy dialogue, but without implementation details.
- ii) None of the COSOPs discussed the resources needed to carry out policy dialogue; as a result, in practice it received only marginal attention.
- iii) Much of IFAD's focus during implementation was on projects, with little attention to conducting dialogue on broader sectoral policy and institutional issues, even when these were critical to assuring sustainability or scaling up.
- iv) Insufficient effort was made to draw and disseminate lessons from project experiences.
- v) Few country and regional grants from IFAD were used to feed into policy dialogue at the country level.
- vi) The weak performance of policy dialogue appears to be correlated with the performance of knowledge management and of partnerships with multilateral development banks.

93. For the preparation of the ARRI 2012 learning theme on policy dialogue at the county level, interviews were conducted with selected IFAD managers and staff in PMD and the Office of Strategy and Knowledge Management (in 2013, it was renamed Strategy and Knowledge Department). The key findings from these interviews are summarized in annex VII.
94. Moreover, the ARRI points out that IFAD still does not adequately draw from the outcomes of its grant-funded research to inform policy dialogue at the country level. The latter was also highlighted in the CLE on grants policy.
95. The ARRI 2014 in particular underlines that in large countries (e.g. Brazil, China and India) which traditionally have very strong political and administrative systems and efforts in policy dialogue should set its objectives realistically and determine the type and extent of policy dialogue it can undertake.

2. Country programme evaluations

Outputs

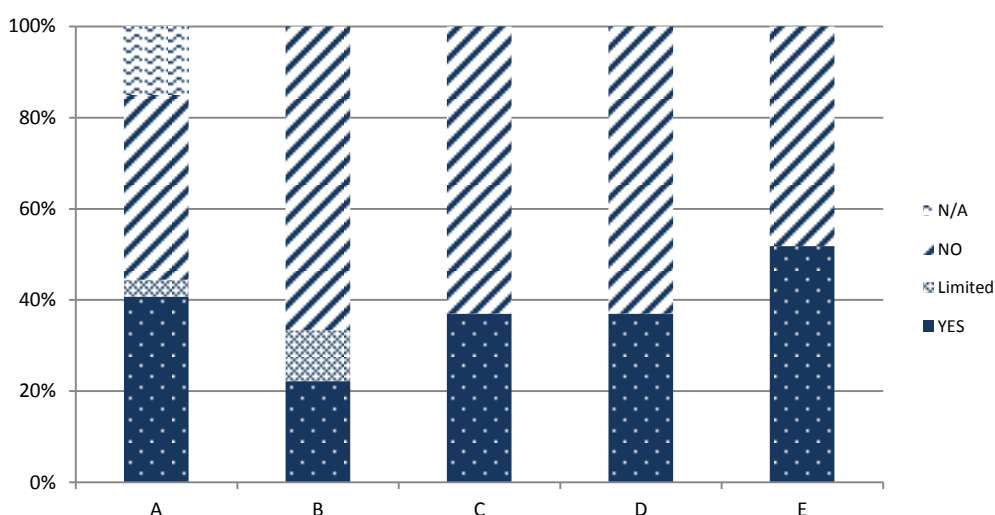
96. The ES identified five categories of outputs:
- (i) contributions of the CPM/CPO to sector working groups;
 - (ii) policy analysis work and/or Technical Assistance notes for policy formulation;
 - (iii) contributions to the design of new national programmes (through projects);
 - (iv) workshops, seminars, trainings (national/regional); and
 - (v) spaces or platforms for rural policy dialogue.
97. **Supporting spaces and platforms for policy dialogue is the most common output** produced by IFAD-supported programmes (52 per cent), followed by contributions of CPM/CPO to sector working groups (41 per cent). On the other

⁶⁵ See section E :Evidence from CLEs/ CLE on PBAS.

⁶⁶ See section E :Evidence from CLEs/ CLE on IFAD's Policy on Grant Financing.

hand, undertaking policy analysis work and TA for policy formulation has only occurred in approximately 20 per cent of the countries.

Figure 8
Categories of country-level policy dialogue outputs produced (in percentage; CPEs 2010-2016)



- A: Contribution of CPM/CPO to sector working groups.
 B: Policy analysis work and TA Notes for policy formulation; supporting preparation of new national policies and strategies.
 C: New national programmes (through projects).
 D: Workshops, seminars, trainings (national/ regional).
 E: National stakeholders, focal groups, platforms for dialogue.

98. Examples of support to spaces and platforms for dialogue for policy dialogue include support to the Specialized Meeting on Family Farming (*Reunion Especializada de Agricultura Familiar - REAF*) in Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. Other discussion groups more directly related to the portfolio include Focal Area Reference Groups at the project level (Mozambique) and Programme Steering Committees. The country programme management teams, which are a resource group of stakeholders who participate in the entire cycle from the result-based COSOP through programme design, implementation and supervision, also act as an important platform for policy dialogue.
99. In 41 per cent of the countries the CPM/CPO has contributed to sector working groups, including donor coordination groups where IFAD participates actively. In Viet Nam, for example, IFAD participates in mechanisms such as the forest sector support group on the framework for sustainable forest land management, the microfinance working group, and the partnership committee for Programme. In Bangladesh IFAD participates in two local consultative working groups – Agriculture and Water Management – which are fora for development partners and the Government. In addition, documentation of experiences and good practices has been strengthened to facilitate evidence-based policy dialogue. In Mozambique, since 2003, the country office has been co-chairing the working group on agricultural extension. In Rwanda IFAD is an active member of the sector working group led by the Ministry of Agriculture. This working group developed a single consistent approach to M&E that the Government adopted as its approach to M&E in the agriculture sector.

Intermediate outcomes

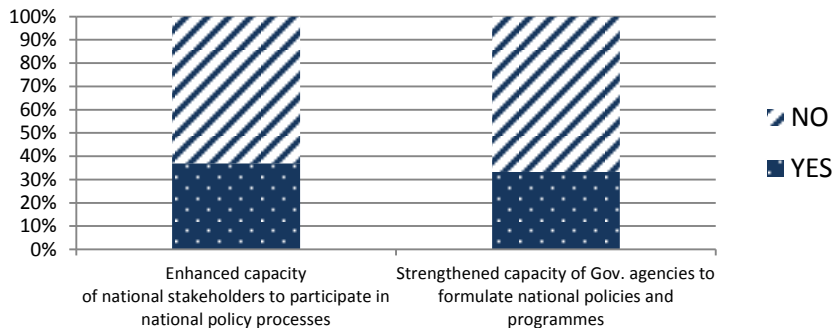
100. The Evaluation Synthesis identified two types of intermediate outcomes (results corresponding to the use of outputs) related to **increases in capacity**:
- (i) enhanced capacity of national stakeholders to participate in national policy processes; and

- (ii) strengthened capacity of government agencies to formulate national policies and programmes.

101. In both cases approximately one third of the countries showed evidence of progress in terms of these two intermediate outcomes.

Figure 9

Categories of county-level policy dialogue intermediate outcomes produced (in percentage; CPEs 2010-2016)



Enhanced capacity of national stakeholders to participate in national policy processes

- 102. Most cases include the capacity development of small farmers' organizations and organizations of the rural poor to participate and influence policy discussions
- 103. In India, the latest CPE in 2016 reported that there was evidence of openness from the central and state government levels to receive inputs for policy dialogue based on documented evidence and proven lessons from within the country as well as global knowledge from organizations like IFAD. For example, IFAD-supported projects have played a critical role in the development of grass-roots organizations, such as the Village Development Committees and especially self-help groups, by building their capacity to undertake collective actions for community development. The Government has become more open in accepting of the role that NGOs can play in providing a voice to rural communities and in lobbying for improved service delivery in rural areas. In Madagascar, IFAD, in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Bank, has been advocating for the participation of representatives of farmers' organizations in the process of preparing the Agricultural Sector Programme.
- 104. In Argentina, IFAD supported and promoted rural policy discussions at the sub-regional level, facilitated the participation of organizations of the rural poor in policy dialogue, and supported the generation and dissemination of knowledge concerning rural development and family farming. IFAD provided support to the participation of small farmers' organizations in developing rural development policies. The (*Foro Nacional sobre Agricultura Familiar - FONAF*)⁶⁷ brings together more than 900 small and medium-sized farmers from across the country, representing about 180,000 families, and provides a vital platform for discuss development policies in this sector.⁶⁸
- 105. In Yemen, IFAD support to social mobilization in rural areas increased their role as lobbying platforms to secure services from the Government and NGOs. In Niger, IFAD helped to strengthen the capacity of farmers' organizations in order to enable them to increase their participation to the public policy debate on agriculture.

⁶⁷ In Argentina the debate over rural poverty that these activities generated in the country, the participatory approach of the Government and the activities of rural associations in search of political participation led the Government of Argentina to create the FONAF (National Forum on Smallholder Agriculture) in 2006.

⁶⁸ Annex VIII is a background paper on lessons learned from IFAD's experience in Argentina concerning policy dialogue. The Argentina CPE is the only one for the period considered in this Evaluation Synthesis for which the policy dialogue rating is 6, the maximum score.

106. In addition to its support to rural organizations, IFAD has supported platforms for dialogue on rural development issues. For example, as mentioned above, the Knowledge for Change grant project, cofinanced by IFAD, led to the creation of rural dialogue groups in Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador and Mexico. The rural dialogue groups consists of 10-30 influential individuals representing social organizations, the business sector, intellectuals, NGOs and members of the Government who convene to discuss issues that have been excluded from government agendas. Each group is jointly convened by the national government and a civil society organization. In few years, these groups have achieved significant policy outcomes, such as contributing to the formulation of the Strategy for Rural Well-being in Ecuador.

Strengthening capacity of government agencies to formulate national policies and programmes

107. Close to 40 per cent of the countries covered by the Evaluation Synthesis report on advances in terms of strengthening the capacity of government agencies to formulate national policies and programmes through a variety of means, including institutional support, raising awareness and capacity and in some cases the creation of permanent high-level institutions (e.g. FONAF in Argentina).
108. In Indonesia, the IFAD-supported programme had a positive impact in terms of strengthening the capacity of the Agency for Agricultural Human Resource Development in the Ministry of Agriculture, BRI, and district governments to service the rural poor.
109. In Madagascar, one project (PROSPERER) provided: (i) institutional support to the Ministry of Agriculture for the development of a national strategy for agricultural and rural financing; (ii) support for the Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry for developing a new draft decree-laws of the ICC and the Federation; and (iii) institutional support to the Ministry of Economy.
110. In Zambia, IFAD contributed to raising awareness and capacity among government, non-government and private sector partners in the approach of "agriculture as a business". Non-lending activities (particularly policy dialogue within Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock played a key role.
111. The IFAD Programme of Credit and Technical Support for Small Producers in Northeast Argentina (PNEA) supported the creation of permanent high-level institutions for the formulation and implementation of rural development policies and family farming. The project also strengthened relations between various sectors of the federal government and provincial governments involved in activities to eradicate rural poverty. The debate on rural poverty generated within the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR), the participatory approach of the Government, and the activities of rural associations looking for political participation led the Government of Argentina to create the FONAF in 2006 through Resolution 132/06.⁶⁹
112. In Nigeria, IFAD and the Central Bank of Nigeria pioneered the strengthening of the two APEX associations (National Association of Microfinance Banks and Association of Non-bank Microfinance Institution of Nigeria) and provided policy advice and support during the preparation of their strategy documents and corporate scorecards. IFAD also supported the Central Bank of Nigeria in developing its financial inclusion strategy.

⁶⁹ See annex VIII.

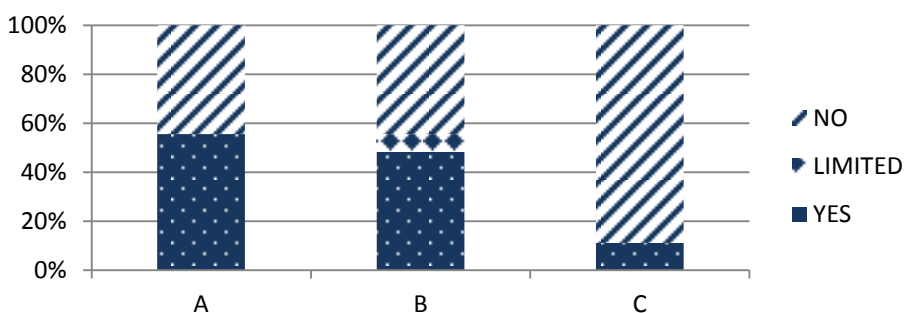
Final outcomes

113. The Evaluation Synthesis identified three categories of final outcomes:⁷⁰

- (i) Influence/change/adjustments in policies (national, regional, local, sectoral), legislation and/or procedures;
- (ii) Scaling up and adoption by the government of successful models and initiatives; and
- (iii) Operationalization of a national policy or programme (at national or at the local level).

Figure 10

Categories of country-level policy dialogue final outcomes produced (in percentage; CPEs 2010-2016)



A: Influence/ change/ adjustments in policies (national, regional, local, sectoral), legislation, procedures (drafted, proposed, approved).

B: Scaling up and adoption by the government of successful models and initiatives.

C: Operationalization of a national policy or programme at national or at the local level.

Influence/change/adjustments in policies (national, regional, local, sectoral) legislation and/or procedures

114. Slightly over half (56 per cent) of the CPEs covered by the ES provide evidence of contributing to change or to adjust policies, legislation and/or procedures at various levels, including national, regional and local on a broad range of areas related to rural poverty alleviation, including pro-poor rural policies and strategies, rural Finance, gender, smallholder agriculture indigenous peoples rights, and, among others (see box 2 below).
115. In several countries IFAD has promoted pro-poor approaches in policies and legislation. In Nepal, the successful experience of the Hills Leasehold Forestry and Livestock Project was used to convince senior GON officials of the effectiveness of a new pro-poor approach to forestry, which was then incorporated by government as a priority poverty programme in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and enshrined as a national policy. The step-up from project to national programme was supported by a complementary Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations /TCP to assist GON to draft the necessary legislation. In Indonesia, the PIDRA was successful in influencing government to introduce some of the successful experiences of its strategy in anti-poverty programmes.
116. In addition, closely linked to efforts in connection to strengthening capacity of government agencies to formulate national policies and programmes (see section on intermediate outcomes above) positive outcomes have been achieved. In Yemen, IFAD helped the Government of Yemen to reassess its own priorities with respect to the rural poor, as demonstrated in the much more explicit pro-poor rural strategies of the PRSPs from 2000 onwards. In Vietnam, an important focus of IFAD's policy agenda has been on activities in support of the new rural

⁷⁰ The Evaluation Synthesis acknowledges the limited evidence on country-level policy dialogue outcomes from IOE evaluations, as country-level policy dialogue has not been central in the design and implementation of IFAD interventions and has not been addressed in detail in CPEs or in project or grant evaluations.

development strategy and the support to MARD in evaluating the national policy for rural development. In Brazil, the Ministry of Agrarian Development and IFAD have managed to bring to the table the priorities of Brazilian family farmers and included their representatives in the dialogue alongside government officials and other policy- and decision-makers.

117. As far as rural finance, in India for example IFAD operations have been effective advocates for the potential of the self-help group/microcredit combination for promoting rural development. In the Gambia, IFAD and the Government engaged in fruitful policy dialogue, which led to the reform of the microfinance sector in the country. In Ecuador IFAD supported and setting up group microcredit lines, which made a significant contribution to the rural financial system in Ecuador. In Uganda, since 2006, IFAD has been actively engaged in dialogue on the policy changes in rural finance and National Agriculture Advisory Services (NAADS). In Zambia, the most significant achievement in recent years appears to be the development in the sector of rural finance policy and strategy for the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL), which will likely constitute the basis for a well-structured development plan for the sector. On smallholder agriculture, Bangladesh illustrates an interesting case where one project (the national Agriculture Technology Project) - cofinanced with the World Bank was approved only after the Government agreed to a number of major institutional and policy reforms which would ensure an enabling environment for the implementation of the project, including the adoption of a new Bangladesh Agricultural Research Committee (BARC) Act, which gave space for financing research through competitive grants. However, this way of influencing national policies corresponds more to policy conditionality than to policy dialogue.
118. In Kenya, at the national level, IFAD has contributed to the roll-out of the national irrigation policy by providing grant funding for sensitising parliamentarians and others on the main provisions of the policy. IFAD was also involved in the formulation of the domestic horticulture policy under the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture. In Argentina, in order to start a dialogue on the issue of access to land, IFAD financed a study on land whose first stage just ended and given start to the second stage
119. On gender, Tejaswini Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh in India have contributed to important policy processes. The project management agency was asked to draw upon Tejaswini and other experiences and input into Maharashtra Women's Policy, 2013. The Shaurya Dals of Madhya Pradesh is being replicated state wide, and this strategy is included in the Vision 2018 document of the state.
120. On indigenous peoples' rights, in India, tribal projects and programmes gave IFAD a seat in the national policy debates on tribal rights. In support of Indian legislation offering land rights to tribals, in the first Orissa project, the Fund successfully pioneered an approach whereby rights in traditional forest land were given jointly to husbands and wives. In Ecuador IFAD supported the drafting and adoption of legislation to protect indigenous culture and setting up group microcredit lines, which made a significant contribution to the rural financial system in Ecuador

Box 2

Key areas in which IFAD has contributed to policy dialogue

Slightly more than 50 per cent of the CPEs covered in the evaluation synthesis report on policy influence/change/adjustments on a broad range of areas related to rural poverty alleviation. The most common areas are:

- Pro-poor rural policies and strategies, as well as pro-poor approaches in areas such as e.g (forestry, fisheries, small rural infrastructure)
- Rural finance,
- Smallholder agriculture (e.g. irrigation, access to land)

Other areas where CPEs report on influence/change/adjustments on rural pro-poor policies, are gender equality and indigenous people's rights.

Scaling up and adoption by the government of successful models and initiatives

121. Close to half (48 per cent) of the CPEs provide evidence on scaling up and adoption by the government, at national and sub-national (provincial, district) levels, of successful models, approaches and initiatives supported by IFAD. Some cases provide evidence of operationalization of a national policy or programme at the local level.
122. In India, a number of government agencies, at the central and state levels, have found IFAD's solutions pertinent to the problems of rural development and the rural poor in the country. In 2014, the Government of India (central level) expanded NERCORMP II activities to new districts by exclusively funding a third phase of the project, covering a total of US\$90million and targeting 58,850 households in 1,177 villages in new districts. The "Shaurya Dal"⁷¹ Initiative under the Tejaswini project is likely to be extended throughout the state, and there is also an expression of interest from New Delhi to extend it to other states. With regard to self-help groups, IFAD lobbied with the then Minister of Finance in 1999/2000 to support their further expansion through the government budget, which was approved by the national parliament and then implemented through a variety of national programmes and schemes. The use of self-help groups and village development committees in poor and tribal communities and the institutionalization of links with microfinance institutions have been important contributions to India's rural development programme.
123. In Viet Nam, features of the area-based model have been integrated into government policies and programmes at provincial and national levels. There is increased use of participatory approaches in planning and project implementation. For example, the design and modalities of Programme 135 for supporting poor communes, gender equality and women's empowerment, and other features bear the stamp of the approach pioneered by IFAD. In Nepal, the concept of leasehold forestry had been scaled up significantly.
124. In Mozambique, in the context of IFAD's support to artisanal fisheries, the introduction of the concept of district-level development funds and the development and replication of Accumulative Savings and credit Associations (ASCAs) are examples of activities and approaches that have been scaled up to national level and are being implemented across Mozambique or adopted in the national regulatory framework.
125. In the United Republic of Tanzania, the programme Agriculture Sector Facilitation Team is now fully embedded in the government structure. The Farmers' Field School methodology and the Zanzibar-specific innovations (the Farmer Facilitators and the Community Animal Health Workers) have all been adopted by the

⁷¹ The main purpose of the Shaurya Dal initiative is to mobilize communities against gambling, alcoholism and domestic violence.

Government as part of its policies and strategies and are being integrated in government programmes.

126. In Brazil, the Dom Hélder Câmara Project introduced many innovative features (e.g. participatory and bottom-up processes for planning and resource allocation, water management) which are being scaled up into state- and national-level policies and programmes through strong engagement in policy platforms.
127. In Ghana, the creation of the micro and small enterprises sub-committees, initiated through the Rural Enterprises Project, Phase II, was scaled up through policy discussions with the Rural Enterprises Project, Phase II Board, IFAD and the Government, mainstreamed micro and small enterprises promotion within the district assembly, facilitated the creation of small businesses in the districts and enhanced the revenue generation potential of the district assemblies, in addition to creating jobs. These efforts resulted in two policy initiatives in the local government system through the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development: (i) the establishment of micro and small enterprises sub-committees within district assemblies; and (ii) the Legislative Instrument 196 – Local Government (departments of district assemblies) Commerce Instrument, 2009. Both have provided legal instruments to support public-private sector collaboration at the district level.

Operationalization of a national policy or programme (at national or at the local

128. In Ecuador, through the Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian Peoples' Development Project, IFAD contributed to the implementation at the national level of a state policy of the *Consejo de Desarrollo de las Nacionalidades y Pueblos del Ecuador* aimed at promoting indigenous peoples' and Afro-Ecuadorians' access to social and economic opportunities. As a result of the government's decision to institutionalize the implementation of the Central Corridor Development Project within the *Ministerio de Inclusión Económica y Social-Instituto Nacional de Economía Popular y Solidaria*, the project thus became an instrument for the implementation of the policy of economic and social inclusion of the Ministry and ceased to be a parallel structure as it was mainstreamed within the core activities of Ministry.
129. In Mozambique the IFAD-funded Niassa Agricultural Development Project introduced the concept of district development funds, to be planned and managed jointly with communities, at a time and in a context where public resources were entirely planned and managed by central and provincial governments. The concept, though challenging to implement, has become a key element in the Government of Mozambique's decentralization policy.
130. The CPE in Moldova underlines that IFAD is not a small player in the agriculture and rural development context in the country. It provides significant funding for investment. As such the decisions made together with the Government about what to fund and how, are important inputs into policy in Moldova. IFAD is now the main support for microfinance in Moldova and its continuing involvement helps to maintain the focus of the Government on this topic.

F. Evidence from corporate-level evaluations

131. CLEs are also a major source of evaluative evidence on a number of key issues relevant to policy dialogue. All CLE produced by IOE for the period 2010–October 2016 have been considered in this Evaluation Synthesis.
132. The CLEs analysed in this report provide evidence of the broad range of opportunities that policy dialogue has to boost the performance of the Fund, not only in connection to scaling up IFAD's innovations and strengthening its impact, but also on other important priority areas.

133. **Scaling up.** The CLE on IFAD's Capacity to Promote Innovation and Scaling Up (2010) emphasizes that IFAD's policy dialogue and partnership-building agendas at the country level should also be driven by the objective of scaling up, and therefore focus on few topics that are part of the Fund's innovation agenda in the concerned country. It underlines that one reason why IFAD's performance in scaling up has been inadequate in the past is that the attention devoted to non-lending activities (knowledge management, partnership-building, and policy dialogue) has been generally too limited. In general, these activities are likely to require additional financial and staff-time resources.
134. The same CLE underlines that policy dialogue is necessary to ensure buy-in among those development partners who potentially have the resources and capabilities to replicate and scale up innovations successfully experimented in IFAD-funded operations.
135. According to the CLE on IFAD's Institutional Efficiency and Efficiency of IFAD-funded Operations (2013), with limited resources, policy dialogue, knowledge management and partnerships need to be focused in the first instance on scaling up successful operations in countries, rather than pursued as ends in themselves.
136. **The role of grants.** The CLE on the IFAD Policy for grant financing (2014) recognizes grants as an essential ingredient that could be used to pilot innovations to be scaled up through loans, or support project design, sector and poverty analysis that would inform policy dialogue. The CLE provides ample evidence of grant support to different forms of policy dialogue. In particular, the Latin America and the Caribbean Division (LAC) has given special emphasis to policy dialogue through its grant portfolio, initially through partnerships with intergovernmental organizations and also with Canada's IDRC and national governments. Grants have provided support to REAF within MERCOSUR through a series of grants (e.g. 904, 1109) and supported rural policy dialogue groups in four LAC countries, as mentioned earlier in the document on the section on outputs.
137. Other examples of grants for policy dialogue include: in Rwanda, to help the Government prepare the Agriculture Strategy and Action Plan;⁷² a recent one for Indonesia for promoting South-South and triangular cooperation; and two grants in Kenya (951 and 1305) that included policy dialogue activities.
138. Grants have also promoted exchanges between project staff and policy-makers in the Near East, North Africa and Europe region, improving awareness among policy makers of important issues concerning smallholder agriculture. Grants have helped strengthen regional networks of farmer federations, notably in the regions of East and West Africa.
139. Moreover, some grants have been instrumental in fostering cooperation with other institutions, such as the Indigenous Peoples' Forum, regional farmer federations and the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) centres. The grants have been used to finance work in various fields (e.g. indigenous peoples rights, agricultural research, small-holder agriculture) contributing to promote dialogue with selected grant recipients on key thematic, development and policy issues. This is particularly the case with institutions that have received several grants over time from IFAD.
140. The CLE also notes that although COSOPs present opportunities for innovation and policy dialogue and often provide an overview of partners' capacity gaps, they do not always discuss the role that grants could play in supporting the programme (e.g. capacity-building).

⁷² This was not part of the COSOP, as mentioned earlier in para. 84, reinforcing the ad hoc approach to the use of grants for policy dialogue.

141. The CLE recommended that the overarching objective of the country-specific grants should be to promote programmes and policies for rural poverty alleviation without substituting for activities funded through loans. Within this objective, IFAD grant funding should support, among others: development of national policies and strategies for rural development; and knowledge management that relates to policy dialogue and IFAD's scaling-up agenda.
142. The CLE on IFAD's institutional efficiency and efficiency of IFAD-funded operations (2013) reports weak linkages and synergies between loans and grants and with country strategies, as well as weak monitoring of grants. At the same time it highlighted the potential of grants for innovation and policy dialogue
143. **Synergies between lending and non-lending activities.** The CLE on IFAD's institutional efficiency and efficiency of IFAD-funded operations pointed out that insufficient synergies across the project portfolio, and between the investment operations and non-lending activities (partnerships, policy dialogue and knowledge management) are constraining the overall impact of IFAD country programmes.
144. The African Development Bank (AfDB)-IFAD joint evaluation on agriculture and rural development in Africa (2010) found that policy dialogue on agriculture and rural development at the country level was generally found to be inadequate. The evaluation pointed to weak performance of M&E systems at the project level and lack of systematic attention to knowledge management. It also underlined that unless both institutions have the capacity to undertake adequate analytical work to inform their policy dialogue, partnerships, innovation and knowledge management, the two organizations will achieve only limited success in improving the relevance of their strategies or in stepping up the performance of the operations they finance.
145. **The Performance-based Allocation System.** The CLE on PBAS (2016) concluded that the PBAS strengthened partnerships and policy dialogue with country authorities. The CLE considered the PBAs as a strategic tool to boost policy dialogue, contributing towards the establishment of an enabling policy and institutional environment. In particular, the RSP scoring process, if conducted in a participatory manner with government authorities and other in-country partners, may serve as a useful opportunity for policy dialogue. In few cases, IFAD has fully used the COSOP process as an opportunity to promote dialogue around RSP scores. The CLE recommends that, with regard to the RSP, due attention should be devoted to systematizing and strengthening the RSP scoring and its quality assurance processes, viewing it as an opportunity to strengthen partnerships at the national level, knowledge management, and policy dialogue.⁷³
146. Consistent with the findings from the PBAS CLE, the CLE on IFAD's Decentralization Experience (2016) identifies the RSP scoring process as a tool that has the potential to institutionalize country-level policy dialogue and enhance the role of ICOs in that process. Each year, IFAD assesses the policy and institutional environment for reducing rural poverty for every country of operation and summarizes the findings in the RSP score, which is included as a policy variable in the PBAS formula.
147. **Decentralization and country presence.** The CLE on IFAD's Decentralization Experience generated two relevant findings for policy dialogue extracted from the interviews, case studies and workshops performed during the period of the evaluation. First, it was noticed that ICOs, particularly CPM-led ones, had the opportunities to: (i) establish long-term engagement (building relationships, trust and understanding of local priorities and constraints) with national policy-makers; (ii) base suggestions for policy reform on good practices documented in knowledge products and grounded in project experience; and (iii) participate in sector working groups and engage with all relevant actors. Second, the evaluation recognized that,

⁷³ PMD is currently working on a revision of the RSP scoring.

because of the small size and competing priorities of ICOs, relatively few ICO staff were allocated to policy dialogue (e.g. Bolivia, Ecuador, Kenya, Peru, Philippines).

148. The CLE highlights how the incorporation of policy dialogue in COSOPs and project design documents tends to be determined by the interests and experience of the CPM and how ICO staff allocate their time to this task. The evidence presented in this evaluation indicates that the leadership provided by the regional directors has a significant impact on the contribution to policy dialogue. Another important factor presented in the CLE is that the turnover of the CPM and long delays to fulfil a vacancy have a negative impact on policy dialogue.
149. **Supervision and implementation support.** The CLE on IFAD's Supervision and Implementation Support Policy (2013) found that the occasions on which policy dialogue activities take place during supervision and implementation support missions are primarily discussions held at sector working groups. Other useful occasions are ad hoc field missions and COSOP/design missions. Some CPMs have pointed out that these events are supported by regular correspondence and follow-up with the concerned policy-makers and that achievements in this area would have not been possible otherwise.
150. The CLE finds that IFAD has not internalized how to conduct an evidence-based policy dialogue with governments on broad rural poverty issues or systemic project implementation issues brought up during the supervision process. This will require commissioning studies on policy problems and using learning events as a way of reaching a wider audience. It should be noted, as mentioned in chapter 3 of this Evaluation Synthesis, that it is important to involve national counterparts in the identification of policy problems or issues, avoiding a supply-led approach to policy dialogue.
151. The CLE also underlined that other IFIs have mechanisms that allow the "promotion" of issues identified through project supervision to the level of policy dialogue with the government. By and large, this is the annual project portfolio review process headed by a senior official of the concerned IFI.
152. The CLE recommended that IFAD Management should invest more on knowledge management activities linked to supervision and implementation support and strengthen policy dialogue opportunities by using its regional directors to bring systemic issues to the attention of the national authorities. Grant resources can be also used to finance knowledge management activities and research studies to support an evidence-based policy dialogue (even though in some cases there may be project components and/or budget lines that could be used for this purpose).
153. **Private sector.** Policy dialogue for local private sector development is one of the three broad lines of action of IFAD's Private Sector Development and Partnership Strategy. The CLE on Private Sector Development and Partnership Strategy (2011) found that about half of the set of COSOPs considered by the Executive Board between 2007 and 2010 included a review of the country's policy and institutional environment for private sector development; whereas a quarter contained a clear agenda for policy dialogue on private sector issues; and half documented consultations with private sector entities in the development of the COSOP. The evaluation concluded that the implementation of the first broad line of action in the private sector strategy, on policy dialogue for local private sector development, has been moderately satisfactory.
154. The evaluation observed that IFAD focuses much of its policy dialogue at the investment project level. While this plays a useful role, the essentially opportunistic nature of project-related dialogue means that IFAD does not take a coherent approach to the broad challenge of supporting private sector development. It concludes that there are ample opportunities to use policy dialogue more

effectively as a central instrument for ensuring a wider engagement of the private sector in rural poverty reduction efforts in borrowing countries.

155. The Private Sector Development CLE concluded that IFAD's policy dialogue capabilities at the country level are often constrained by a number of factors. These include limited time and resource allocation, as well as insufficient skills and competencies of CPMs, who are required to lead the policy dialogue efforts.
156. The CLE recommended that IFAD raise its profile on policy issues relating to the role of the private sector in supporting rural poverty reduction, especially at the country level. This will require: (i) using the COSOP formulation process to more systematically discuss the opportunities and constraints to rural private-sector development and to promote a dialogue within the country on these issues; (ii) working more closely with other multilateral development banks to ensure that issues affecting private sector development related to agriculture are on the agenda of their dialogue with governments; and (iii) using the grant programme more strategically to fill gaps in IFAD's and the government's knowledge and understanding of these issues and provide the analytical underpinnings for enhanced policy dialogue.
157. **Gender.** The CLE on IFAD's Performance with Regard to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (2010) identified some good examples of policy dialogue on gender at the country level, but also noted that, in general, policy dialogue on the topic is left to individual initiatives and interests.
158. On the whole, the CLE concluded that policy dialogue at the country level on gender equality and women's empowerment has not been successful. Even in COSOPs where gender concerns are part of the planned policy dialogue agenda (e.g. Peru), almost no support has been provided to CPMs in terms of resources, work plans and targets. Policy dialogue has also tended to be constrained by weak knowledge management and insufficient analytic work. Nevertheless, IFAD has made useful contributions to the debate among policy-makers and development practitioners on gender equality and women's empowerment in key international fora. Better knowledge management, learning and analytic work will contribute to IFAD's policy dialogue and advocacy efforts on gender.
159. **Policy dialogue in fragile and conflict-affected states.** The CLE on IFAD's Engagement in Fragile and Conflict-affected States and Situations (2015) calls for extended policy dialogue to demonstrate that politically sensitive issues in fragile and conflict-affected states and situations fall well within IFAD's mandate. This CLE emphasized how IFAD's approach to programme and project development⁷⁴ does not always take into consideration the drives of conflict and fragility. It also recognized that developing ownership of the policy goals needed to address them is challenging and requires expert and persistent policy dialogue. Therefore, it was recommended, in fragile states with low government capacity, that projects have simple objectives and design, taking into account the country's policy and institutional context, and that greater attention be devoted to ensuring customization of development approaches based on the context.

G. Policy dialogue as part of the lending activities

160. Policy dialogue has been pursued as part of the investment portfolio through specific project activities, components or sub-components. The review of PPAs and PCRVs included in this report⁷⁵ provides evidence of policy dialogue at the project level. A few examples are described in this section.

⁷⁴ Aligning interventions with a country's agricultural plans through jointly development COSOPs which enables IFAD to tailor its interventions and support to each partner country's stated needs and strategy.

⁷⁵ The Evaluation Synthesis considered all PPAs and PCRVs whose rating for "institutions and policies" is 4 or more, and which correspond to CPEs since 2010 with a rating for policy dialogue of 4 or more (10 PPAs and 5 PCRVs). See annex IX.

161. Among the ten PPAs covered in this synthesis, the Rural Development Project for the Northeastern Provinces PPA in Argentina was the only one to receive a rating of 6 for the criteria of Institutions and Policies. The project carried out a significant systematization effort and generated a large volume of information, which have contributed to fostering a culture of dialogue and learning among participants in the region, and served as a platform for important policy dialogue.
162. The Microfinance and Technical Support Project PPA (2012) in Bangladesh concluded that the project did not set out to impact policy or influence the microfinance practices through policy change. It was argued that the size of the project was too small compared to the business of the implementing agency and its partner organizations to secure policy reform. On the other hand, the Microfinance for Marginal and Small Farmers Project PPA (2014) in Bangladesh concluded that the major contribution that the project made in influencing institutions and policies was with respect to facilitating the mainstreaming of seasonal and agricultural lending to farmers in Micro-Finance Institutions and also in the apex organization. The implementing agency (the same one that implemented the other project) now has seasonal loans and Agricultural Sector Microcredit as part of the core programme, and the lending under these windows has been steadily increasing.
163. The Dom Helder Camara Project PPA (2011) in Brazil shows how the project promoted the National Programme for Strengthening Family Agriculture credit lines targeting women and young people by creating working groups on credit, gender and generation in each supported territory. The project also influenced the establishment of such credit lines by the Banco do Nordeste. The Gente de Valor PPA (2015) in Brazil shows how IFAD and the Government of Bahia have shown dedication and commitment to this project from policy and operational points of view. However, in both projects insufficient attention was dedicated to monitoring, analysis, documentation and systematization of the results and experiences. This could constrain the possibility of extracting lessons learned for use in future poverty reduction initiatives and further policy dialogue actions.
164. The National Microfinance Support Programme in India had a component on policy advocacy and action research to promote an annual, high-level forum to discuss key issues in microfinance, to examine new innovations, and to compare Indian achievements to state-of-the-art practices elsewhere. The PPA (2013) noted several innovative initiatives of the programme in the area of institutional development and policy advocacy. The SIDBI Foundation for Micro Credit played a proactive role in the formulation and revision of the Microfinance Regulation and Development Bill, including making presentations to the Standing Committee on Finance of the Parliament.
165. The Livelihoods Improvement Project in the Himalayas included a subcomponent on policy studies and advocacy. With this component, the project aimed to broaden the range of development options in the Himalayan region. To this end, the project planned to finance studies to improve the data available for planning and to test-pilot activities related to land tenure and the legal, administrative, biophysical, and socio-economic factors that affect the decisions associated to slash and burn agriculture.
166. The Vegetable Oil Development Project PPA in Uganda showed how IFAD has contributed actively to policy dialogue within the donor working group of agriculture, including the vegetable oil subsector, contributing to the preparation of the first joint assistance strategy in Uganda by several major donors.
167. Three out of five PCRVs reviewed were projects in which a component or a subcomponent for policy dialogue had been implemented. The PCRV for Market Infrastructure Development Project in Charland Regions in Bangladesh pointed out that the policy dialogue envisioned during design did not inform policy-makers on potential reforms regarding the management of markets. However, it

successfully established micro-market management committees. The PCRV for the Rural Income Promotion Programme in Madagascar had a component for “programme management and contribution to policy improvement”. However, the project was not able to provide concrete rural development policy inputs. The ambitious, and innovative, design of the programme apparently was not commensurate with the institutional capacities in a context of political and economic crisis, in particular during the last four years of implementation.

168. The promotion of policy dialogue was part of a subcomponent in the Initiative de Réhabilitation et de Développement Agricole et Rurale-Renforcement des Capacités Institutionnelle Project in Niger. The PCRV for this project acknowledges that IFAD was active in promoting dialogue and coordination between the Government and other key partners (World Bank and the Global Environment Facility).

Key points

On inputs

- The Evaluation Synthesis distinguishes country-level policy dialogue activities carried out in connection to programme design and implementation and those undertaken through other corporate processes, such as the PBAS. Policy dialogue during COSOP and project preparation is the most common type (59 per cent). 11 per cent of the county evaluations (Niger and Rwanda) showed no evidence of policy dialogue.
- A large majority of the countries (89 per cent) had included policy dialogue objectives in their respective COSOP. However, despite the attention dedicated to policy dialogue as an objective, only 15 per cent of the total CPEs showed evidence of budget allocation for policy dialogue included in the COSOP.
- The main IFAD partners identified by the CPEs covered by the Evaluation Synthesis are the government (100 per cent of the cases) and the private sector (85 per cent) (although in half of the cases private sector engagement is only limited).
- Close to half (41 per cent) of the countries funded policy dialogue activities through grants; 33 per cent funded policy dialogue through both project component and grants; and 15 per cent through a project component.

On outputs

- Supporting spaces and platforms for policy dialogue is the most common output produced by IFAD-supported programmes (52 per cent), followed by contribution of CPM/CPO to sector working groups (41 per cent). As far as enhanced capacity of national stakeholders to participate in national policy processes, most cases include the development of capacity small farmers' organizations and organizations of the rural poor to participate in and influence policy discussions. In addition to the support to rural organizations, IFAD has supported platforms for dialogue on rural development issues (e.g. the "Knowledge for Change grant project". On the other hand, undertaking policy analysis work and technical assistance for policy formulation has only occurred in approximately one fifth of the countries.
- Close to 40 per cent of the countries report on advances in terms of strengthening capacity of government agencies to formulate national policies and programmes through a variety of means, including institutional support, raising awareness and capacity, and in some case the creation of permanent high-level institutions (e.g. FONAF in Argentina).

On outcomes

- Approximately half (55 per cent) of the CPEs provide evidence of contributing to change or to adjusting policies, legislation and/or procedures at national, regional or local level. Examples of promotion of pro-poor approaches in policies and legislation can be found in several countries (e.g. Bangladesh, Ecuador, Kenya, Indonesia, Nepal, Yemen).
- The CLE on IFAD's performance with regard to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (2010) concluded that policy dialogue at the country level on gender equality and women's empowerment has not been successful, constrained by limited resources, weak planning (work plans, targets) and knowledge management. On the other hand, IFAD has made useful contributions to the debate on gender equality and women's empowerment in key international fora.

Key points on overall approach and strategy

- **Policy dialogue plays a key role as a main driver for scaling up.** Limited attention devoted to non-lending activities has constrained IFAD's performance in upscaling. Close to half (48 per cent) of the CPEs provide evidence of scaling up and adoption by the government, at both national and sub-national (provincial, district) levels, of successful models, approaches and initiatives supported by IFAD. Some cases provide evidence of operationalization of a national policy or programme at the local level.
- **Non-lending activities** (policy dialogue, partnerships and knowledge management) **are crucial to IFAD to leverage and enable deeper impact for its programmes on both the policy and the operational/financial fronts.** They are mutually reinforcing actions that complement IFAD's investment projects. ARRI 2016 reports that performance in non-lending activities is only moderately satisfactory. The performance of policy dialogue declined from 73 per cent of country programmes rated moderately satisfactory or better in the period 2009-2011 to 58 per cent in 2011-2014, to 54 per cent in 2013-2015. None of them is satisfactory or highly satisfactory.
- **Challenges and opportunities remain.** Findings from the ARRI reveal that while there are some examples of IFAD's favourable contribution to policy dialogue at the country level, they are by and large episodic and not based on a systematic approach. Challenges identified by the ARRI include the mismatch between the scale of IFAD's policy ambitions as articulated in country strategies, the challenges of achieving pro-poor policy change, and IFAD's capacity, resources and management incentives to deliver that change.
- **The PBAS (in particular the RSP scoring process) is considered a strategic tool to boost policy dialogue,** contributing to the establishment of an enabling policy and institutional environment. The RSP scoring process, if conducted in a participatory manner with government authorities and other in-country partners, may serve as a useful opportunity for policy dialogue to promote a more conducive policy and institutional environment that favours the reduction of rural poverty. In few cases, IFAD has fully used the COSOP process as an opportunity to promote dialogue around RSP scores.*
- **Grants have a special value for supporting policy engagement, research and partnerships.** They are recognized in evaluations as an essential ingredient that could support poverty analysis that would inform policy dialogue. The CLE on grant financing provides ample evidence of grant support to different forms of policy dialogue. The CLE also notes that although COSOPs present opportunities for policy dialogue – and often provide an overview of partners' capacity gaps – they do not always discuss the role that grants could play (e.g. capacity-building).
- **Policy dialogue has often taken place during supervision and implementation support missions,** primarily through discussions held at sector working groups and ad hoc field missions. However, IFAD has not internalized how to conduct an evidence-based policy dialogue with governments on broad rural poverty issues or systemic project implementation issues brought up during the supervision process.
- **Insufficient synergies** across the project portfolio, and between the investment operations and non-lending activities, are constraining the overall impact of IFAD country programmes.

* See further analysis on PBAS as a strategic tool to boost policy dialogue, on the section on findings from CLEs earlier in the report.

H. Strengths/good practices/success factors

169. Despite the overall weak performance of policy dialogue at the country level, the synthesis show that there is evidence (although limited) of good practices and success factors concerning policy dialogue and there were individual cases of success cited in several CPEs. The most common theme in successful examples was that **IFAD was able to draw from project experiences to influence a specific policy, introduce a new concept, or influence the design of government programmes outside the projects**
170. Another area in which IFAD has performed well in policy dialogue is when IFAD's successful project experience has been used as the basis for its **policy advocacy function on behalf of marginalized groups**.
171. In India over the years, IFAD has built a strong relationship with the Government at various levels, contributed to wider acceptability of partnering with NGOs and civil society organizations for grass-roots development, devoted much attention to promoting pro-poor innovations, and not refrained from working in districts with high prevalence of insecurity, such as in Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand-Chattisgarh, Orissa and the North East. In Nepal, IFAD was one of the pioneers of an important and effective approach to combining poverty reduction with improved natural resources management – leasehold forestry – which was and continues to be a flagship feature of IFAD's programme in the country. In addition, project presence and experience were used to conduct policy dialogue at the local level. The Government monitored local legislation and brought issues to the attention of the tribal areas where the projects were located.
172. Argentina presents one of the most outstanding examples of good practices in policy dialogue.⁷⁶ Argentina has conducted policy dialogue through three complementary fronts: (i) IFAD activities funded by the MERCOSUR sub-regional donations; (ii) activities of IFAD-funded projects; and (iii) IFAD's direct support to the debate on rural poverty funded by a national grant. Policy dialogue in Argentina has contributed to achieving deep-seated institutional change. IFAD has supported and promoted policy discussions at the sub-regional level in the framework of the IFAD-funded grant REAF in Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. REAF provided a platform for small producers and their organizations to engage in national policy processes on agriculture, including mobilizing technical assistance and identifying market opportunities. It also facilitated the participation of poor rural organizations in policy dialogue and supported knowledge generation and dissemination on rural development and family farming policy. These activities contributed to generating debate on rural poverty in Argentina and raised the smallholder agriculture sector's profile in a country that has traditionally been oriented towards agroindustry for export.
173. The success of initiatives such as those in Latin America and India highlights the importance of enabling poor rural men and women to influence policies and institutions that affect their livelihoods, which is one of IFAD's strategic objectives.
174. The Country Programme Evaluation in Madagascar in 2013 showed evidence of a **high-level commitment between the Government of Madagascar and IFAD**. One of the clearest examples is through the creation of the CAPFIDA, which was structured within the Ministry of Agriculture. CAPFIDA supports the programme in several aspects: group discussions around new project preparation and COSOP; technical and methodological support, monitoring, compilation and analysis of COSOP activities; development of partnerships; and dialogue on public policy as well communication. Even during a crisis period when dialogue on public policy was considered prohibitive by some donors, IFAD and the Government made significant efforts in terms of concrete analysis of project experiences to inform discussion of

⁷⁶ See annex VIII.

national reforms (as in the case of land security) and to support the creation of national institutions, such as the National Land Observatory.

175. (i) The examples of Argentina and Madagascar illustrate two good practices of policy dialogue associated with focused support over an extended period of time. The maturity reached in both cases have resulted in very positive results. In Argentina, policy dialogue has been one of the IFAD's main contributions since the beginning of its activities in the country in 1983. The first project in the north of Argentina (PNEA) provided the first steps to a long process of policy dialogue focused on rural development and family agriculture. IFAD's policy dialogue in Argentina has also been supported by a series of sub-regional grants (five since 1999) to the programme IFAD-MERCOSUR. In Madagascar, IFAD's continued operations and participation in the country have achieved a significant level of policy dialogue. Set up initially to carry out administrative tasks, the CAPFIDA unit today supports not only the portfolio of projects in Madagascar but also monitoring of the COSOP, partnership development and policy dialogue. Each quarter, one of the four active projects is responsible for the CAPFIDA budget, using resources from the IFAD loan. (ii) In Niger, IFAD's liaison office has made it possible for the Fund to play an active role in dialogue with the Government, establishing effective partnerships with key partners to ensure the achievement of project objectives. Grants have been instrumental in the renewal of IFAD's intervention in Niger. The close cooperation of the West and Central Africa Division and PTA with international partners and the project team has created synergies between loans and grants. IFAD's participation in policy dialogue has taken place primarily through cofinanced projects and technical assistance grants. Relevant issues discussed include the National Strategy for Microfinance and the National Strategy for Cereal Banks Management.
176. In interviews conducted with selected IFAD managers and staff in PMD and the Strategy and Knowledge Management Department (which in 2013 was renamed Strategy and Knowledge Department) for the preparation of the ARRI 2012 learning theme (see annex VI) **most managers recognized IFAD's important role in policy dialogue** and agreed that **IFAD's comparative advantage in policy dialogue is to focus on issues arising from the experience of IFAD-funded projects**. Managers also emphasized the need for: (i) selectivity in the policy agenda, given limited resources and institutional limitations (e.g. little or no country presence in many countries); and (ii) the critical importance of partnerships with other major players, especially multilateral development banks and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, to enhance IFAD's ability to influence policy in the agriculture and rural sectors.

I. Opportunities and challenges

177. The **growing number of IFAD country offices offers new opportunities** for IFAD to be more involved in country-level policy processes. The CLE on IFAD's Decentralization Experience (2016) noticed that ICOs, particularly CPM-led ones, had the opportunity to: (i) establish long-term engagement with national policy-makers; (ii) base suggestions for policy reform on good practices documented in knowledge products and grounded in project experience; and (iii) participate in sector working groups and engage with all relevant actors. For example, in Nigeria, the setting up of an IFAD country office in 2008 triggered the conditions for cost-effective opportunities to engage in policy discussions and enabled IFAD to actively pursue policy linkages and jointly follow up on actions with the Government and other donors.
178. In addition, consistent with the findings from the PBAS CLE, the same CLE identifies the **RSP scoring process as a tool that has the potential to institutionalize country-level policy dialogue and enhance the role of ICOs in that process**. The CLE points out that if IFAD were to adopt a more rigorous ICO-led approach to the RSP scoring process that involved systematic consultation

with local stakeholders, it could serve as a useful tool to identify the policy areas where IFAD should engage.

179. On the other hand, both the CLE and the CPEs mention challenges in connection to the country presence. The CLE recognized that, because of the small size and competing priorities of ICOs, relatively few ICO staff were allocated to policy dialogue (e.g. Bolivia, Ecuador, Kenya, Peru, Philippines). In addition, the implementation of the country programmes absorbed the majority of effort of all categories of staff in ICOs. Among the non-lending priorities, partnership absorbed the most time, leaving policy dialogue with a small time allocation. The India CPE notes that even with the strong country presence of an out-posted CPM, the size, geographical spread and complexity of the programme make it extremely difficult for the country office to perform equitably in all areas of their responsibility. Most time is spent in project back-stopping and implementation missions, while critical non-lending dimensions receive less priority in the agenda. Therefore, more attention needs to be devoted to financial and human resources that are deployed at country level.
180. Limited IFAD country presence and the **shortage of staff** are recurrent themes in most CPEs. The recommendation on strengthening ICOs was made in countries such as Bangladesh, China, India, Nepal, Viet Nam and Yemen. In most of the cases, this recommendation was linked to the **recommendation on the out-posting of the CPM**. In countries such as Bangladesh, Brazil, China and India, this recommendation was made given the size of the programme and the volume of in-country interactions between and among the development partners and the government. It is worth mentioning that, paradoxically, the single highest rating for policy dialogue (6) was for a country without IFAD country presence: Argentina.
181. All country programmes covered by this Evaluation Synthesis have experienced different types of challenges or shortcomings with respect to policy dialogue, many of them identified by the ARRI 2012 (see box 1) and confirmed by interviews with managers and staff in PMD and the Strategy and Knowledge Management Department (which in 2013 was renamed Strategy and Knowledge Department). (see annex VI). One of the most common challenges was the **lack of a specific budget, insufficient resource allocation and a strategic plan to follow**. In addition, the **lack of adequate M&E systems** and quantitative information has made it difficult to demonstrate the effects and impacts of projects at the country level. In Ecuador and Mozambique, the recommendation to strengthen policy dialogue gave emphasis to the need to improve human and financial constraints.
182. Another challenge (underlined in ARRI 2016) is the absence of a **more programmatic approach**, including more systematic donor coordination, as well as a clear strategy and agenda to strengthen strategic partnerships, ensure better policy dialogue and increase cofinancing.
183. In some cases, the **government's political and institutional instability** has proven to be a factor that can become a challenge when engaging in policy dialogue. For example, the CPEs for Ecuador and Yemen illustrate how high turnover among the institutions responsible for implementation, irregular fulfilment in providing counterpart funds, and problems with monitoring and assessing the impact of operations have affected the government's ability to engage in effective dialogue. In some countries, the **government's interest** in engaging in policy dialogue with IFAD might be insufficient when **IFAD is not perceived a lead partner**.
184. **The analysis of the CPE recommendations** in connection to policy dialogue shows that most of them are geared towards the strengthening IFAD's efforts in this activity, taking advantage of existing unmet potential, as well as towards strengthening of the two other non-lending activities (partnerships and knowledge

management), which, taken together, are expected to help enhance the programme's development effectiveness in a given country (see box 3 below)

Box 3

Country programme evaluation recommendations on country-level policy dialogue

- Strengthen country presence/strengthen ICO and out-posting of CPMs (Bangladesh, Bolivia, China, Ecuador, India, Ghana, Mozambique, Viet Nam, Yemen).
- Promote innovation and scaling up through strategic partnerships with governments and like-minded organizations (China, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda,).
- Enhance synergies among lending activities, non-lending activities and strategic use of grants (Argentina, Jordan, Moldova, Nepal, Senegal, Turkey).
- Strengthen non-lending activities (Brazil, Ecuador, Moldova, United Republic of Tanzania, Turkey).
- Take a more active role in policy dialogue (Yemen, Bangladesh).
- Define a more realistic agenda for policy dialogue with thematic or sub-sectoral focus (Mali, Uganda,).
- Ensure that project design and implementation influence systems and approaches (Ethiopia).
- Strengthen policy dialogue to ensure sustainability (Zambia).

185. On many occasions, IOE evaluations have underlined in recommendations insufficient synergies between the investment operations and non-lending activities. The **mutually reinforcing character of the three non-lending activities** merits special consideration and attention to ensure synergies not only between lending and non-lending activities, but also among the three non-lending activities. Effective country-level policy dialogue depends intimately on successful partnerships at various levels as well as on sound knowledge management capable of distilling and synthesizing lessons and experience required to inspire new policies. For example, the Ethiopia CPE made explicit mention of the few IFAD knowledge products or policy papers that could form the basis for policy discussions with the Government.
186. Other recommendations focus on **strengthening objectives for policy dialogue** and the definition of strategies for policy dialogue in the COSOPs. The Uganda CPE recommended that, during the preparation of the next COSOP, IFAD and the Government should define realistic objectives for policy dialogue and specify areas where IFAD will play a lead supportive role, in partnership with other development partners, to improve the agriculture-related policy environment. The Bolivia CPE recommended that IFAD and the Government jointly define a strategy for dialogue based on the experience and results of the IFAD-supported programme, and on an analysis of the main rural development challenges affecting programme performance. The strategy aimed to clearly define the dialogue's objectives and IFAD's specific contribution, as well as establish continuity throughout M&E systems, knowledge dissemination, opportunities for scaling up project results and innovations, and partnerships with government agencies and other actors.
187. As far as the **experience of comparator institutions** (e.g. African Development Bank, Asian Development Bank, Inter-American Development Bank - World Bank) **concerning policy dialogue**, most of them focus on addressing issues such as improving the planning and coordination of policy dialogue efforts, strengthening capacity, expertise and resources, improving the assessment and monitoring of progress on policy dialogue, and ensuring broad participation in policy dialogue.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Obviously, the organizations benchmarked have different level of resources, organizational architecture and capacities to conduct policy dialogue, as compared to IFAD.

188. The **African Development Bank** acknowledges that in most countries in Africa there is at least one independent policy research institution and that the Bank will need to strengthen its partnership with these institutions, using their capacities for policy research to complement its limited in-house capability. It points out that this is particularly important for the Bank's decentralization roadmap, given the limited capacity of field offices to conduct analytical work for policy dialogue and Bank operations. Partnering and supporting country-level think tanks or policy research institutions result in country ownership of the policy processes and can substantially enhance the Bank's knowledge work at the country level.
189. The **Asian Development Bank** considers policy dialogue as one of its main instruments for helping its developing member countries and emphasizes the importance of establishing the link between policy dialogue and project implementation in order to perform better in the country.
190. In the **Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)**, rather than policy dialogue at the country level, regional policy dialogue constitutes one of the IDB's main mechanisms to promote knowledge-sharing between high-level government officials from Latin America and the Caribbean and experts in key development areas. Regional policy dialogue covers strategic topics for the region through its networks. The objective of these networks is to promote dialogue between public officials who work in the same sector, with the aim to facilitate the exchange of experiences, innovative practices and lessons learned.
191. The **World Bank** stresses the need to ensure appropriate dissemination of knowledge products to facilitate policy development, and emphasizes more active dialogue with national governments, local governments and stakeholders as a way to enhance the Bank's understanding of political economy considerations and ultimately improves its development effectiveness in the countries it supports. A new line of work that the Bank recently started that is related to policy dialogue is on citizen engagement.⁷⁸ This is a departure from practices that focused exclusively on high-level policy dialogue to persuade leaders to adopt changes, with no role for political engagement by citizens.
192. As a way to synthesize IFAD's experience on country-level policy dialogue or engagement, the following table may be useful. The left column ("traditional practice") corresponds to key features of IFAD's experience. The table also prepares the ground for the next chapter on conclusions and recommendations.

⁷⁸ Khemani, Stuti *et.al.* (2016) Making Politics Work for Development: Harnessing Transparency and Citizen Engagement World Bank; Devarajan, S. & Khemani, S. (2016) If Politics is the Problem, How Can External Actors be Part of the Solution? Policy Research Working Paper, World Bank Group. See also GAO (2016) Open Innovation: Practices to Engage Citizens and Effectively Implement Federal Initiatives; and IEO (2016) Evaluation of the Global Environment Facility – Civil Society Organization Network.

Table 3
Policy dialogue/country-level policy engagement: Comparison between traditional and good practices

<i>Traditional practice</i>	<i>Good practice</i>
Informal	Systematic
Opportunistic	Proactive
Unrecorded	Recorded
Un-resourced	Resourced
Without indicators	With indicators
Without incentives	With incentives
Unclear definitions	Clear definitions
Policy dialogue as a non-lending add-on	Policy dialogue as part of lending
Implicit	Explicit
Invisible	Visible (with deliverables)

Source: interviews, synthesis of evaluations and literature review.

193. Some of the ten features of “traditional practice” presented in the table could be combined with the corresponding “good practice” feature; for example, a proactive approach to policy dialogue could be combined with the pursuit of unanticipated opportunities for policy dialogue. This will be further elaborated in the next chapter.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

194. The Evaluation Synthesis concludes that **IFAD has increased its focus and efforts on policy dialogue and engagement at the country level** through its lending and non-lending programmes. Although there have been some remarkable achievements, particularly through grants, there is scope for substantial improvement. Most of the work on country-level policy dialogue and engagement has been informal, reacting to opportunities, unrecorded, un-resourced, with neither indicators nor incentives, with non-lending as an add-on, and without deliverables. This evaluation synthesis may support IFAD's learning and contribute to enhance the quality of its policy dialogue and engagement at the country level as a key instrument for the achievement of IFAD's strategic objectives.
195. Given the relatively small financial resources of IFAD, the programmes it finances are meant to be vehicles to achieve broader institutional and policy impact for rural poverty alleviation in its partner countries. Therefore, **policy dialogue is an important strategic goal for IFAD**. This approach is outlined in various documents and reiterated most recently in the IFAD 2016-2025 Strategic Framework in which Policy dialogue is identified as one of the four pillars of IFAD's results delivery.
196. In addition, country-level policy dialogue and engagement is **becoming ever-more important for IFAD as both the need and the opportunities for policy engagement are growing**. As more of IFAD's Member States become middle-income countries, they might be more attracted to the opportunity to benefit from IFAD's experience and expertise in rural poverty alleviation. Moreover, IFAD is gaining increasing recognition and is well positioned in many countries, being a respected and trusted partner. The growing number of IFAD country offices offers new opportunities for IFAD to be more involved in country-level policy process
197. Evidence collected through this Evaluation Synthesis allows it to confirm that policy dialogue is **an essential dimension of IFAD's mission as it serves two critical purposes**: i) helping to create an enabling environment for project implementation and for achieving project impact; ii) contributing to creating the conditions for large numbers of rural people to move out of poverty, at a scale that no single project can address. Proven successful approaches can be scaled up, often at the national level, through policy changes.
198. As far as the aim to create an enabling environment for project implementation and for achieving project impact, the Evaluation Synthesis underlines that **non-lending activities are increasingly recognized as essential instruments to promote institutional and policy transformation** at country and multi-country level and to scale up the impact of IFAD operations for deeper results in rural poverty reduction.
199. A number of CLEs underline that **weak synergies across the project portfolio**: (i) between the investment operations and non-lending activities; and (ii) among non-lending activities **are constraining the overall impact of IFAD country programmes**. The Evaluation Synthesis also notes that while policy dialogue is, by definition, part of the "non-lending activities", there are also some examples of policy dialogue components in selected projects and there may be elements of policy dialogue in project cycles. CLEs also highlight that unless there is more capacity to undertake adequate analytical work to inform policy dialogue, partnerships, innovation and knowledge management, IFAD will achieve only limited success in improving the relevance of its strategies or in stepping up the performance of the operations it finances.
200. The report also emphasizes the **synergistic relationship among the three non-lending activities**, as policy dialogue, knowledge management and partnership-

building are mutually reinforcing actions to complement IFAD's investment projects and strengthen programme effectiveness. The Evaluation Synthesis stresses the importance of considering this interdependent relation in order to ensure synergies among them, as well as between them and investment operations.

201. On scaling up the report emphasizes **policy dialogue key role as a main driver for creating the conditions for large numbers of rural people to move out of poverty**. Policy dialogue is widely acknowledged in IOE evaluations and reports for its high potential to contribute to scale up IFAD's innovations and ultimately contribute to achieve the IFAD 10 target of moving 80 million people out of poverty. ARRI recognizes that improving IFAD's effectiveness in engaging in policy dialogue, and in supporting others (e.g. farmers' groups) to do so, will often be critical to scaling up the impact of IFAD-supported initiatives. The CLE on IFAD's Capacity to Promote Innovation and Scaling Up stresses that policy dialogue is necessary for ensuring buy-in among those development partners that potentially have the resources and capabilities to replicate and scale up IFAD innovations. It also underlines that IFAD's policy dialogue – and partnership-building – agendas at the country level should be driven by the objective of scaling up successful operations in countries, rather than pursued as ends in themselves. Furthermore, it should focus on few topics that are part of the Fund's innovation agenda in the concerned country. On the other hand, the same CLE points out that the limited attention devoted to non-lending activities is one reason why IFAD's performance in scaling up has been inadequate in the past.
202. Finally, the Evaluation Synthesis points to a number of **operational issues that might require attention** in the future in order to strengthen IFAD's efforts in connection to country-level policy dialogue and ultimately to improve IFAD's overall development effectiveness. First, while COSOPs included areas in which to focus policy dialogue, very seldom was a budget for policy dialogue activities allocated in those areas; nor were deliverables identified that corresponded to those activities. Second, there are still limitations in both the capacity and the mechanisms available for IFAD to manage policy dialogue effectively. These include: (i) informal and technical policy dialogue has not been documented and thus remains rather invisible and poses a risk of not finding a foothold in IFAD's country-level institutional memory with the turnover of CPMs and/or CPOs. In addition, the non-documentation creates an evidence gap regarding IFAD's experience in policy dialogue and engagement at the country level, particularly as part of lending activities; (ii) indicators for policy dialogue at the country level have not been used, except in a few cases; and (iii) CPMs and CPOs have limited information on policy dialogue experiences, concepts and tools. Moreover, incentives for CPMs/CPOs to engage in policy dialogue have not been put in place. In particular, the performance assessment of CPMs and CPOs has not been taking into account their involvement in country-level policy dialogue; (iv) time constraints faced by country teams; (v) lack of a clear distribution of roles and responsibilities concerning policy dialogue among CPMs, CPOs, and other concerned IFAD staff and; (vi) IOE evaluations considered policy dialogue mainly as a non-lending activity without paying sufficient attention to the informal as well as the technical policy dialogue which takes place as part of lending operations (including design, supervision and implementation support).

B. Recommendations

203. Since an Evaluation Synthesis is mainly a learning product, the focus of its recommendations is on the learning that can be derived. Even though this is not a meta-evaluation, there are lessons to be learned by evaluators. Of course, the main intended audience for the Evaluation Synthesis is PMD, and therefore all of the recommendations except the last one are addressed directly to PMD.
204. **Recommendation 1: Strengthen attention to policy dialogue in the COSOP.** A policy dialogue strategy need to be clearly identified in the COSOP, designed

within the framework a more programmatic approach, and have clearly identifiable objectives. COSOPs should identify deliverables corresponding to policy dialogue activities at the country level (e.g. outputs such as “policy dialogue country notes”, papers on issues to inform policy dialogue), and allocate funds for these activities. Indicators for policy dialogue (at the outputs, intermediate outcomes and outcome levels) should be included in COSOPs and country programmes. Policy dialogue needs to be ultimately seen as an opportunity to broaden the impact of IFAD's programme and operations in the countries. A more programmatic approach, including more systematic donor coordination, and the development of strategies at the country level, with a clear agenda, would enable stronger partnerships to be established at the strategic level as well as better policy dialogue and cofinancing.⁷⁹

205. **Recommendation 2: Strengthen the capacity of CPMs and CPOs in connection with policy dialogue.** CPMs and CPOs should be provided with sufficient information and training on how to conduct and document policy dialogue at the country level, complemented with adequate resourcing to engage in policy dialogue, including better use of country grants. The forthcoming IFAD guide book for country-level policy engagement prepared by PTA is a valuable resource that could be used to inform and train CPMs and CPOs. In fact, this Evaluation Synthesis, complemented with the guide book, may be used to promote learning and cross-fertilization of experiences across CPMs, regional divisions and countries. The involvement of CPMs and CPOs in policy dialogue at the country level should be taken into account in the assessment of their performance.
206. **Recommendation 3: Strengthen the monitoring and reporting of policy dialogue activities.** Policy dialogue that takes place during supervision and implementation support, as well as in the design process, needs to be documented in brief notes, indicating the activity/activities that took place, participants, agreements reached (if any) and/or other results. This will make visible the country-level policy dialogue and engagement and would ensure its preservation in IFAD's institutional memory. Furthermore, it would provide evidence of the policy dialogue that took place.
207. **Recommendation 4: Revisit and strengthen the evaluation approach to assessing policy dialogue at the country level.** In independent evaluations, the assessment of policy dialogue should refer to those activities that are complementary to the lending portfolio, as well as to those policy analysis and advisory initiatives that are supported through project funding (particularly for those projects that include a policy dialogue component). Furthermore, it would be important to consider the links between ‘policy engagement’ and ‘impact on institutions and policies’

⁷⁹ In its comments to a draft of this evaluation synthesis report, Management commented that “Management does believe that policy dialogue is already seen as an opportunity to broaden the impact of IFAD's program and PoLG in countries, notably in the East and Southern Africa region. Policy engagement outcomes and outputs are addressed specifically in each project, where increasingly there are stand-alone components on policy engagement. In fact, this is actually one area where country teams, Regional Directors, regional teams and the PTA desk have collectively made significant strides, and this is not sufficiently reflected in Section IV on “findings”. Section IV is based on the evaluative evidence that was available; future independent evaluations may be able to capture the progress mentioned in Management's comments.

Questions for comparative analysis

Year

Country

Type of evaluation

- Were policy dialogue objectives explicitly recognized/described in COSOP?
- Were budget figures included?
- Type/categories of policy dialogue activities
 - Through COSOP and project preparation
 - Included as specific project component
 - Ongoing dialogue through implementation/supervision
- Which partners are mentioned as having a role in policy dialogue?
 - Government entities
 - Other national entities
 - Private sector
 - International financial institutions
 - United Nations
 - NGOs, universities, research institutes, think tank, individual advisors, other international institutions
- Source of funding
- Project component
- Grants (specify type)
- Outputs
 - Contribution of the CPM/country programme officer to in-sector working groups
 - Policy analysis work and technical assistance notes for policy formulation; supporting preparation of new national policies and strategies
 - Informing design of new national programmes (through projects)
 - Specific workshops, seminars, trainings, national/regional
 - Space for policy dialogue between national stakeholders, focal groups, platforms for dialogue
- Intermediate outcomes
 - Enhanced capacity of national stakeholders to participate in national policy processes
 - Strengthened capacity of government agencies to formulate national policies and programmes
- Outcomes
 - Influence/change/adjustment on policies (national, regional, local), sectorial, legislation, procedures (draft, proposed, approved)
 - Scaling up and/or adoption by government of successful models and initiatives
 - Operationalization of a national policy or programme at the local level
 - Is policy dialogue supporting programme objectives? Are there synergies with the strategy and IFAD programme?
 - Strengths/good practices/successful factors
 - Challenges/shortcomings
 - Any other issues/lessons
 - Recommendations related to policy dialogue
- Ratings for non-lending activities
 - Policy dialogue
 - Knowledge management
 - Partnership-building
 - Overall rating for non-lending activities

Comparative analysis of CPEs

Panel A

No.	Country	Year	Were PD objectives explicitly recognized/ described in COSOP?	Were figures (budget) included?	Type/ Categories of PD activities			Which partners are mentioned as having a role in PD?						Source of funding		Outputs				
					Through COSOP and project preparation	Included as specific project component	Ongoing dialogue through implementation/ supervision	Gov. entity	Other national entities	Private sector	IFIs	UNs	NGOs, Universities, Research inst., think tank, Individual advisors, Other International Inst.	Project component	Grants (specify type)	Contribution of CPM/CPO to in-sector working groups	Policy analysis work and TA Notes for policy formulation; supporting preparation of new national policies and strategies	Informing design of new national programmes (through projects)	Specific workshops, seminars, trainings, national/ regional	Space for PD between national stakeholders, focal groups, platforms for dialogue
1	India	2010	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	LIMITED	LIMITED	LIMITED	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
2	Mozambique	2010	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	LIMITED	NO	YES	YES
3	Argentina	2010	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	N/A	LIMITED	YES	YES	N/A	YES	NO	YES	YES
4	Niger	2011	N/A	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	LIMITED	YES	YES	LIMITED	NO	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO
5	Kenya	2011	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	LIMITED	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO
6	Ghana	2012	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	LIMITED	YES	LIMITED	YES	YES	YES	N/A	NO	NO	NO	YES
7	Rwanda	2012	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES
8	Vietnam	2012	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES
9	Yemen	2012	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
10	Uganda	2013	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO
11	Mali	2013	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	LIMITED	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
12	Nepal	2013	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	LIMITED	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO
13	Madagascar	2013	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	N/A	NO	YES	NO	NO
14	Indonesia	2014	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	LIMITED	NO	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
15	Jordan	2014	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO
16	Moldova	2014	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES
17	Ecuador	2014	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES
18	Zambia	2014	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	LIMITED	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES
19	Senegal	2014	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES
20	China	2014	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	YES
21	Tanzania	2014	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	LIMITED	LIMITED	LIMITED	LIMITED	LIMITED	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO
22	Bolivia	2015	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	LIMITED	NO	YES	LIMITED	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES
23	Brazil	2015	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	LIMITED	LIMITED	LIMITED	YES	NO	YES	N/A	NO	NO	NO	YES
24	Bangladesh	2016	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	LIMITED	YES	LIMITED	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO
25	Turkey	2016	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
26	Ethiopia	2016	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	LIMITED	LIMITED	YES	NO	NO
27	Nigeria	2016	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	LIMITED	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	LIMITED	NO	YES	YES

Panel B

No.	Country	Year	Outcomes			Is PD supporting programme objectives? Are there synergies with the strategy and IFAD programme?	Strengths/ Good practices/ Successful factors	Challenges/ Shortcomings	Any other issues/ lessons	Recommendations related to PD	Rating for NLA			
			Influence/change/adjustments on policies (national, regional, local) sectorial, legislation, procedures (drafted, proposed,	Scaling up and adoption by Gov. of successful models and initiatives	Operationalization of a national policy or programme at the local level						PD	KM	PB	NLA
1	India	2010	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	4	4	3	4
2	Mozambique	2010	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	4	3	4	4
3	Argentina	2010	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	6	5	4	5
4	Niger	2011	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	4	5	5	5
5	Kenya	2011	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	3	5	4	4
6	Ghana	2012	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	4	3	4	4
7	Rwanda	2012	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	3	4	4	4
8	Vietnam	2012	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	4	4	4	4
9	Yemen	2012	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	4	4	4	4
10	Uganda	2013	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	4	3	5	4
11	Mali	2013	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	3	4	5	4
12	Nepal	2013	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	3	3	4	3
13	Madagascar	2013	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	5	6	5	5
14	Indonesia	2014	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	2	3	3	3
15	Jordan	2014	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	3	4	4	4
16	Moldova	2014	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	4	4	4	4
17	Ecuador	2014	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	4	4	3	4
18	Zambia	2014	YES	LIMITED	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	4	4	4	4
19	Senegal	2014	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	4	4	4	4
20	China	2014	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	3	4	4	4
21	Tanzania	2014	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	3	2	4	3
22	Bolivia	2015	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	YES	4	3	3	3
23	Brazil	2015	NO	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	4	4	4	4
24	Bangladesh	2016	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	4	4	4	4
25	Turkey	2016	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	3	4	3	3
26	Ethiopia	2016	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	3	4	4	4
27	Nigeria	2016	YES	LIMITED	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	3	4	3	3

CPEs evidence on the Theory of Change

No	Country	Year	Inputs				Processes (Windows of opportunity)												Outputs				Intermediate Outcomes		Outcomes					
			Time	Budget	Project component	Grants (specify type)	PD in COSOP's design			PD in project design			PD during implementation (supervision)			PD through CPM/CPO participation in-sector working groups			Policy analysis and/or TA Notes for policy formulation	PD workshops, seminars, trainings (national or regional)	Space or platforms for policy dialogue between IFAD and national stakeholders	Space or platforms for policy dialogue between IFAD and other donors	Enhanced capacity of national stakeholders to participate in national policy processes	Strengthened capacity of government agencies to formulate national policies and programmes	Influence change/adjustment on policies (national, regional, local, sectoral, legislation, procedures [drafted, proposed, approved])	Scaling-up and adoption by government of successful models and initiatives	Operationalization of a national policy or programme			
						Regional, Sub-regional	Country specific	Gov. entities	Civil society	Int. Org.	Gov. entities	Civil society	Int. Org.	Gov. entities	Civil society	Int. Org.	Gov. entities	Civil society	Int. Org.	Through projects	Through regional/national forum/groups	Through projects	Through donor groups/PBAs discussions							
1	Ethiopia	2009	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	
2	India	2010	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	
3	Mozambique	2010	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	
4	Argentina	2010	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	
5	Niger	2011	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	
6	Kenya	2011	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	
7	Ghana	2012	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	
8	Rwanda	2012	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	
9	Vietnam	2012	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	
10	Yemen	2012	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	
11	Uganda	2013	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
12	Mali	2013	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	
13	Nepal	2013	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	
14	Madagascar	2013	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	
15	Indonesia	2014	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	
16	Jordan	2014	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
17	Moldova	2014	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	
18	Ecuador	2014	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	
19	Zambia	2014	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	
20	Senegal	2014	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	
21	China	2014	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	
22	Tanzania	2014	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	
23	Bolivia	2015	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	
24	Brazil	2015	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
25	Bangladesh	2016	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
26	Turkey	2016	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
27	Ethiopia	2016	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	
28	Nigeria	2016	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	

Literature review and experience of other agencies with policy dialogue

1. The purpose of this annex is to complement the information provided in chapter 3. In addition to consultations with staff from IFIs, United Nations and bilateral agencies, as well as their organizations' websites, the DAC Evaluation Resource Center (DEReC) <http://www.oecd.org/derec/?hf=5&b=0&s=score>) was also mined.
2. Furthermore, it should be noted that in 2011 the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAid) published a Review of Literature and International Practice in Policy Dialogue¹ in the context of policy dialogue evaluation. In this annex of the Evaluation Synthesis, that review will be complemented rather than repeated.²
3. **Asian Development Bank.** Policy dialogue is considered by the Asian Development Bank as one of its main instruments for helping its developing member countries (in addition to loans, equity investments, guarantees, grants, and technical assistance). It is evaluated in the context of country assistance and sector assistance program evaluations. For example, in the Pakistan country evaluation reference is made to the importance of establishing the link between policy dialogue and project implementation in order to perform better in the country. Furthermore, a lesson learned mentioned in that evaluation is that "Projects in countries with well-known implementation problems need more supervision. Policy dialogue in the case of program loans and supervision during project implementation need to be intensive. The response to policy conditionality varies over time in politically unstable countries, and the program loan instrument needs to be used with care. The Pakistan program operates in a fragile environment and should be managed from that perspective" (p. 87). The Asian Development Bank has not drawn general lessons on its experience with policy dialogue.
4. **Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).** Rather than policy dialogue at the country level, Regional Policy Dialogue constitutes one of the IDB's main mechanisms to promote the knowledge sharing between high-level government officials from Latin America and the Caribbean and experts in key development areas. The Regional Policy Dialogue covers strategic topics for the region through its networks. The objective of these networks is to promote the dialogue between public officials that work in the same sector, with the aim to facilitate the exchange of experiences, innovative practices, and lessons learned.
5. As in the case of the Asian Development Bank, IDB's evaluations that consider policy dialogue at the country level are country programme evaluations. An example is the case of Argentina, the only case in which IFAD's rating for policy dialogue was 6 (the maximum level). In contrast, IDB's CPE acknowledges the lack of policy dialogue asserting that this was due to the lack of opportunities provided by the government (which was the same in the period covered by IFAD's CPE). It argues that the policy dialogue supported by a knowledge agenda that addresses the complex challenges facing Argentina could trigger consensus in the country in the main areas of reform. And that IDB's effort to promote policy dialogue should focus on the most urgent challenges to achieve development objectives, prioritizing areas in which the Bank has comparative advantages in knowledge generation and the identification of best practices. In the case of the Brazil CPE, the IDB evaluation mentions in passing the positive experience with policy dialogue at the subnational level. The IDB has not drawn general lessons on its experience with policy dialogue.

¹ McCullough, Aoife et.al (2011) *Review of Literature and International Practice in Policy Dialogue*. AusAID.

² Vosti, S. et. al.(2015) *External Review of the RIMISP CTD Program: Policy Influence* includes IFAD grants for policy dialogue to RIMISP and therefore is considered in the next chapter.

6. **African Development Bank.** AfDB acknowledged in most countries in Africa there is at least one independent policy research institution and that the Bank will need to strengthen its partnership with these institutions to use their capacities for policy research to complement its limited in-house capability.³ It points out that this is particularly important for the Bank's decentralization roadmap given the limited capacity of field offices to conduct analytical work for policy dialogue and Bank operations. Partnering and supporting country level think tanks or policy research institutions results in country ownership of the policy processes and can substantially enhance the Bank's knowledge work at the country level. Therefore strengthening partnerships with local institutions can leverage country level think tanks and research expertise that are more familiar with the country context and that clearly understand the domestic development agenda, processes and priorities of the government. National and Regional level think tanks have a better understanding of the underlying political economy shaping their respective country policies that can be beneficial in providing intellectual country level knowledge for Bank operations. Therefore, it recommends to provide increased financial resources to country level think tanks and policy research institutions and regional research networks with emphasis on supporting and leveraging knowledge at the country level by partnering with country level policy institutions to conduct country specific ESWs that will feed into Bank's policy dialogue with countries as well as the development of country strategies especially within the framework of the Bank's decentralization roadmap.
7. Complementing the general experience of the AfDB concerning policy dialogue, it is useful to consider the way in which this is reflected at the sector level. For example, it is acknowledged⁴ that Bank's contribution to transport sector development through non-lending activities was marginal. The Bank has only engaged in ESW and policy dialogue as part of its most recent regional corridor project. There is an apparent skills gap among staff within the Bank with respect to transport sector policy and dialogue as well as institutional development. Decentralization has contributed to greater emphasis being placed on non-lending activities. One of its recommendations is to mainstream policy dialogue by undertaking targeted and strategic ESW.
8. **World Bank.** Operations Evaluation Department (2005) Country Assistance Evaluation Retrospective points out that although analytical and advisory activities can be an effective vehicle for engaging governments in policy dialogue and informing civil society, adequate attention needs to be paid to dissemination. And that in many cases, the attention paid to dissemination has been inadequate. Another lesson presented in the Retrospective is that more active dialogue with national governments, local governments, and stakeholders enhances the Bank's understanding of political economy considerations. This is particularly interesting in light of recent World Bank work: a 2016 evaluation of the role of PEA in development policy operations⁵ concluded that the lack of PEA to support politically sensitive and difficult actions tend to reduce the effectiveness of operations. Furthermore, it indicated that a platform for policy dialogue can be created through PEA, which opens space for policy dialogue. Corduneanu-Huci et.al. (2013) is a World Bank handbook which shows how to apply political economy in practice to understand and promote policy change.⁶ An earlier publication, World Bank (2008), uses a political economy approach in the context of policy dialogue.
9. Whereas the World Bank's Independent Evaluation Group (2012) "Designing a results framework for achieving results: a how-to guide" does not mention at all

³ Jones, Basil (2011) *Linking research to policy; the African Development Bank as knowledge broker*, AfDB.

⁴ IDEV (2014) *Transport in Africa: The African Development Bank's Intervention and Results for the Last Decade* AfDB.

⁵ Independent Evaluation Group (2016) *The Role of Political Economy Analysis in Development Policy Operations* The World Bank.

⁶ This handbook can be complemented with Fritz et.al. (2014) *Problem-Driven Political Economy Analysis: The World Bank's Experience* The World Bank.

“policy dialogue”,⁷ IFAD’s Evaluation Manual includes a section on the evaluation of policy dialogue. A new line of work that the World Bank recently started related to policy dialogue is on citizen engagement,⁸ going beyond the traditional approach to high-level policy dialogue. Based on research evidence that moving out of a situation of systemic and persistent governance problems is likely to require the disciplining effects of political engagement and the use of transparency policies to make engagement healthy, the World Bank acknowledges the need to trespass a purely technocratic approach. This would be a departure from practices that focused exclusively on high-level policy dialogue to persuade leaders to adopt changes, with no role for political engagement by citizens.

10. Finally, in a recent assessment of the World Bank experience by Martin Ravallion, a former research director and world expert on rural poverty and impact evaluation, concludes with the statement that “The challenge for the Bank today is to assure that knowledge drives lending and aid, rather than simply serving them when called upon. This requires a quite fundamental change in the Bank’s culture such that managerial and staff incentives are reoriented from lending to learning”.⁹ Chapter 4 of this Evaluation Synthesis shows that to some extent this also applies to IFAD’s experience on policy dialogue at the country level
11. **The German experience.** The discussion of the German experience on policy dialogue in DEVAL (2015)¹⁰ highlights the importance of promoting a relationship of trust in policy dialogue, and it indicates that coordination works best if organized in active working groups for technical policy dialogue under professional leadership. It is also worthwhile to note that use of policy dialogue is considered to be crucial to identify the needs for assistance together with the partners (rather than to influence their policies) and to coordinate within the donor group.
12. **The Swedish experience.** In a recent evaluation of policy dialogue¹¹ it is stated that there is little knowledge of the effects of the policy dialogue, and few studies and evaluations have been performed to analyze this instrument Sida explicitly uses policy dialogue to raise awareness and promote change. Based on the evaluation findings, the team recommends the following actions and approaches to improve its future use of policy dialogue as an instrument of development co-operation: to draft a guidance note on policy dialogue that defines: (i) what it is, within a development co-operation context; (ii) what constitutes successful dialogue; (iii) the different types and purposes of policy dialogue; (iv) when and how they should/could be used, and with which actors; (v) how and where to monitor and report on policy dialogue results. Furthermore, it recommends to clarify and define what constitutes informal policy dialogue, as well as identify when it should be documented or recorded and that it should also develop a means of tracking how such dialogue contributes to specific policy dialogue and programme objectives. It suggests that this could be done initially through a pilot in a sample set of countries to test out different means of tracking informal policy dialogue.

⁷ See also Independent Evaluation Group (2015) *The Quality of Results Frameworks in Development Policy Operations*, which confirms the limitations of World Bank’s results frameworks, and of the Implementation Completion and Results Report Review (ICRRs), with respect to policy dialogue.

⁸ Khemani, Stuti et.al. (2016) *Making Politics Work for Development: Harnessing Transparency and Citizen Engagement* World Bank; Devarajan, S. & Khemani, S. (2016) *If Politics is the Problem, How Can External Actors be Part of the Solution?* Policy Research Working Paper, World Bank Group. See also GAO (2016) *Open Innovation: Practices to Engage Citizens and Effectively Implement Federal Initiatives* and IEO (2016) *Evaluation of the Global Environment Facility – Civil Society Organization Network*.

⁹ Ravallion (2016).

¹⁰ DEVAL (2015) *Accompanying Measures to General Budget Support in Sub-Saharan Africa*.

¹¹ Dana Peebles, Jonas Lövkro, Jonas Nadine, Jubb Georg Ladj & Julia Schwarz (2015) *“Evaluation of Policy Dialogue as an Instrument in Swedish Development Cooperation - the case of Gender Equality”* Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. Despite the ultimate focus on gender equality, this evaluation is one of the richest documents on policy dialogue with potential application also on other key issues related to IFAD’s mandate.

13. The **Sida** evaluation also indicates that there is a need to establish a clear mechanism to strategically co-ordinate the linkages between policy dialogue and programmes, as well as policy dialogue support processes. For this purpose it considers “dialogue plans” which should include sections on: (i) explicit policy dialogue linkages with programme support and research support; (ii) a monitoring plan that includes results, indicators, frequency of reporting, data sources, and that outlines who is responsible for these; (iii) a related capacity development plan for development partners; (iv) identification of which types of policy dialogue processes will be used in which contexts, and why.
14. Concerning monitoring and reporting country progress, the evaluation recommends that reports should include a section that explicitly covers progress on policy dialogue objectives. It can be brief, but should refer to what the specific results are, how they were measured, which inputs contributed to them, and what type of policy dialogue approach was used. Over time, this will help build a body of evidence regarding the most effective approaches to achieving results through policy dialogue. Sida should develop generic policy dialogue results indicators to assist in the development of results strategies and related monitoring plans. These would focus on results indicators for the priority thematic sectors, as well as results related to the different types and purposes of policy dialogue. These indicators would also need to cover how to measure the kinds of results possible through policy dialogue processes, and should be accompanied by guidance on how to collect the related data and how to adapt them to measure country-specific policy dialogue outputs, outcomes and impacts.
15. A combination of formal and informal policy dialogue proved to be effective. However, as informal dialogue is not generally documented, it is difficult to track or assess the effectiveness of specific informal dialogue actions. What constitutes informal dialogue, when and how to use it most strategically, and how to document or measure its effectiveness still needs to be defined and discussed in more depth. Formal dialogue requires stakeholders to articulate an official position to which they can be held accountable, and informal dialogue is critical for following up on such commitments to ensure that there is a common understanding of what has been agreed, and for discussing the next steps to be taken and what kind of additional support, if any, is required. The effect of informal dialogue also needs to be monitored and tracked. Furthermore, policy dialogue support processes, such as related research and training on specific policy dialogue issues, were an essential means of awareness-raising and increasing knowledge. Policy dialogue is important because it puts a topic on the agenda, and different actors can have the opportunity to express their opinion about it, eventually leading to a change in attitudes and behavior.
16. **Use of complementary approaches.** Policy dialogue and programme/project support can be mutually reinforcing, but special care needs to be taken to ensure they actually complement each other and work towards systemic change as part of a coherent and conscious plan.
17. **Capacity, expertise and human resource issues.** With the focus on aid effectiveness within development co-operation, there is increasing need for country staff to engage in policy dialogue. This need is not yet matched by capacity development efforts. This has meant that staff have primarily had to learn how to conduct policy dialogue through trial and error on the job. Addressing this capacity gap requires a more systematic approach to developing staff competencies and skills related to policy dialogue strategies and the most effective ways to combine them with complementary programmes and dialogue support processes.
18. **Monitoring of progress on policy dialogue:** Without any indicators and monitoring tools at hand, successes and experience cannot be catalogued to the extent required, nor can they be adequately shared (lessons learned). This is an

especially important issue for policy dialogue. Indicators also need to be realistic and measure a range of immediate, intermediate and long-term results. To develop these indicators, it is also necessary to go beyond stating policy dialogue objectives by outlining specific results anticipated. There is also a need for indicators and processes to measure the effects of informal dialogue.

19. **Long-term perspective.** The evaluation findings suggest that policy dialogue should be dealt with as a process that can take place at many different levels in society over a long period of time. This long-term perspective means that Sida's approach to policy dialogue needs to be phased with policy dialogue plans establishing long-term objectives and also analysing the stepping stones to reach those objectives that can be achieved through policy dialogue within the timeframe of a typical country strategy
20. **Policy dialogue as participatory process.** Policy dialogue needs to allow for broad participation, and the views of different stakeholders must be taken seriously. For a policy to be "owned" by society and, thereby, be implementable, diverse stakeholders have to be involved and have the opportunity to weigh positive and negative potential effects of the new policy and to voice their opinions. The dialogue can then be regarded as successful if the issues, concerns and interests of these actors are reflected in the final policy document. Policy Dialogue can also foster donor co-ordination.
21. **The Norwegian experience.** A recent evaluation of Norway's support for advocacy in the development policy arena¹² is relevant for policy dialogue. In fact, although the report refers to the United Kingdom's Department for International Development suggestion that, rather than describing its 'influence' on other organizations, terms such as 'advice', 'negotiation', 'policy dialogue' or 'engagement' may be more palatable, as talking about 'advocacy' and 'influencing' can be politically sensitive in different contexts, it nevertheless uses the term "advocacy". One of the lessons it draws from experience is that the scope and aims of Norway's ambitions necessitate long periods of engagement, which should be planned for while maintaining flexibility and responsiveness to the different contexts within each engagement. By prioritizing along comparative advantages and matching ambition to capacity, Norway could identify a select number of issues on which to engage for a substantial amount of time, supported by sustained political, financial and technical resources.
22. It also argues that a broad coalition should be developed and maintained to improve the sustainability of advocacy engagements. This should be backed up by financial resources over the medium term to allow individuals and their institutions to function. Furthermore, conducting stakeholder analysis/mappings for the advocacy targets and partners would be useful. Developing indicators of behaviour change for these key actors could be a useful subsequent addition. Finally, concerning strategic communication and messaging it considers that to maximize the effectiveness of advocacy engagements it is important balancing and tailoring the message for different constituency groups; and labels for branding advocacy activities to increase visibility.
23. **The Australian experience.** According to Bazeley et.al. (2013)¹³ policy dialogue could be better incorporated into AusAID's practices by promoting a common understanding and providing senior direction on policy dialogue, embedding policy dialogue into aid management practices, ensuring policy dialogue is properly resourced, and supporting the skills development of staff. Findings from this evaluation also led to the development of the first official policy dialogue guidelines

¹² Tilley, Helen et.al. (2016) *Evaluation of Norway's Support for Advocacy in the Development Policy Arena* NORAD.

¹³ Bazeley, P., Brown, T and Rudland, E. (2013) *Thinking and Working Politically: An evaluation of policy dialogue in AusAID*, AusAID.

for AusAID as well as formal mechanisms to improve policy dialogue capacity. Some conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation are relevant for IFAD:

24. Policy dialogue is important and has to be seen as a central element of a modern fit-for-purpose aid program that seeks to effect transformative, sustainable development at greater scale than the sum of the transactional values of aid flows alone might achieve. The business case for policy dialogue is essentially one of achieving value for money (efficiency, effectiveness and economy) in Australia's international development effort.
25. What constitutes policy dialogue is not clearly understood across AusAID. But there are certainly examples of where AusAID is engaged in very high quality, high value, policy dialogue—where staff have exceptional experience and expertise in policy work
26. Policy dialogue should be informed by evidence which should be locally owned, shared and understood by stakeholders. AusAID should invest in working with partners to build the evidence base for good policy and in understanding what sort of evidence will be most useful and relevant in the context. The effective use of evidence in policy dialogue was found to be one of the strongest determinants of the overall success of policy dialogue.
27. On measuring performance of policy dialogue, AusAID (2011) states that there is a lack of clarity within the aid programme beyond measurement of the outputs of a portfolio of activities. It suggests that developing a theory of change, or a model of how policy influencing activities are envisaged to result in desired changes, is a key way to address these problems, and that key evaluations of policy dialogue will have to be more process-based than results oriented. Political crises may provide opportunities for policy dialogue which could result in fast policy changes.
28. **United Kingdom's experience.** The Department for International Development and the Overseas Development Institute generated a valuable literature on policy dialogue, with lessons that are potentially useful for IFAD, and which are presented in the following paragraph.
29. Monitoring Policy Dialogue: Despite its often intangible nature, policy work can be successfully "projectized", with staff time and other resources committed against a clear strategy to achieve desired results. Implementing a monitoring process for policy dialogue will help staff effective practice and better results.¹⁴
30. **Monitoring and evaluation of policy influence:**¹⁵ Collecting, monitoring target audiences, making judgements about level of influence (and so on) are time-consuming and tricky activities, while staff carrying out policy influencing activities tend to already be overstretched and under-resourced. It is crucial, therefore, to ensure that any effort spent carrying out this M&E is time well spent. Any systems developed should ensure that information collected can have multiple uses (e.g. both for decision-making and, later, reporting), and that it is integrated with, and draws on, any information or knowledge produced during the planning stage of a project. It is important to develop some kind of theory of change (ToC) as early as possible in the planning stage of an influencing project. This sets the overall framework for M&E, giving teams a way to categorize and make sense of available information throughout the project, and a basis for more in-depth studies by external evaluators during or after the intervention. Recording observations from meetings and negotiations is a useful and low-cost activity. This could be done simply by storing emails, meeting minutes or back-to-office reports, or using meeting observation checklists to record how particular issues are covered, or how

¹⁴ Watson, S. & J. Pierce (2008) Monitoring Policy Dialogue: Lessons from a Pilot Study, Department for International Development.

¹⁵ Jones, H. (2011) *A guide to monitoring and evaluating policy influence*, Overseas Development Institute. <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/6453.pdf>.

different actors behaved. For a slightly more in-depth analysis, an 'after action review' (a tool designed to help teams come together to reflect on a task, activity or project in an open and honest fashion) could be carried out with the project team to discuss what happened, why, and what can be learned.

31. Rapid Outcome Mapping Approach (ROMA),¹⁶ developed by the Overseas Development Institute, is an online guide to understanding, engaging with and influencing policy, including practical tools.
32. **The Peruvian experience.** The "*Mesas Ejecutivas*" were introduced in Peru as an instrument for organizing the public-private dialogue to identify problems and propose solutions.¹⁷ It is a policy innovation that emphasizes experimentation, learning and improvements over time.
33. **Policy dialogue requires information to flow both ways.** The widespread linear model to influence policy through research (which predominates in IFIs that use the Analytical and Advisory Activities approach), assumes that if relevant knowledge is generated then it will be applied. However, as pointed out by Carden (2009)¹⁸ "information needs to flow both ways. Important as it is for researchers /and PCMs/ to speak to policymakers, it is just as important for researchers /and PCMs/ to listen. This is the dialogue in which attentive researchers /and PCMs/ hear policymakers' questions in their own words (...) understanding the policy problem as the policymaker sees it, then crafting a research-based answer in similar terms, speeds communication and influence". Otherwise, it is unlikely that the knowledge products will support an effective policy dialogue.
34. Distinguishing between adversarial and collaborative discourse, monologues and genuine policy dialogue: Tuler (2000)¹⁹ provides a broader context for the argument made in the previous paragraph. He points out that many issues require decisions or agreements among competing stakeholders who argue, deliberate, and discuss about a variety of matters, including facts, values, substance, and processes. Often such discussions, decisions or agreements remain elusive because the process of decision making becomes adversarial. Yet, while policy deliberations can be instrumental in character, they have also been viewed as potentially enabling new understandings and inclusive agreements to develop. Two ways of talking in policy deliberations are defined: monologic and dialogic. These are forms of discourse which corresponds to the distinction between adversarial and collaborative ways of talking, respectively. It should be noted that whereas the latter can be considered genuine policy dialogue, the former is a sort of pseudo-policy dialogue, more related to policy conditionality, which sometimes is presented as policy dialogue but that actually is a monologue.
35. **On the need for humility in policy dialogue.** The type of monologue mentioned at the end of the preceding paragraph, characteristic of policy conditionality, is particularly inappropriate given the complexity of the political and economic system. A number of policymakers have come to "accept that they, and particularly those who advise them, have to exhibit a little more humility" "what we may be able to learn is the emergence of certain patterns".²⁰

¹⁶ <http://www.roma.odi.org/>.

¹⁷ Ministerio de la Producción Perú (2016).

<http://www2.law.columbia.edu/sabel/papers/LIBRO%20MESAS%20EJECUTIVAS%20English%20version.pdf>.

¹⁸ Carden, Fred (2009) *Knowledge to Policy*, IDRC. This book is a source of important insights on knowledge communication and on developing policymakers' capacities at the country level, based on IDRC's experience.

¹⁹ Tuler, S (2000) "Forms of talk in policy dialogue: distinguishing between adversarial and collaborative discourse" *Journal of Risk Research*, Vol.3,1.

²⁰ Kirman (2016).

List of key persons contacted

Périn Saint-Ange, Associate Vice President, Programme Management Department

Adolfo Brizzi, Director, Policy and Technical Advisory Division

Lisandro Martin, Chief, Programme Management Department

Luis Jiménez McInnis, Director, Partnerships and Resource Mobilization Office

Ed Heinemann, Lead Technical Specialist, Policy and Technical Advisory Division

Lauren Philips, Senior Technical Specialist, Policy and Technical Advisory Division

Paul Winters, Officer-in-Charge, Strategy and Knowledge Department

Ashwani Muthoo, Director, Global Engagement, Knowledge and Strategy Division

Fabrizio Felloni, Deputy Director, IOE

Paolo Silveri, Country Programme Manager, Latin America and the Caribbean Division

Fabrizio Bresciani, Regional Economist, Asia and the Pacific Division

Steven Jonckheere, Knowledge Management and Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, West and Central Africa Division

Joseph Nganga, Country Officer, East and Southern Africa Division

Nigel Brett, Lead Portfolio Advisor, Asia and the Pacific Division

Tarek Kotb, Country Programme Manager, Near East, North Africa and Europe Division

Octavio Damiani, Consultant

Tino Smail, Evaluation Consultant, German Cooperation and independent researcher

Ruy de Villalobos, former policy-maker, IFAD staff and consultant

David Gómez Alvarez, policy-maker and visiting scholar, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Aziz Aliev, National Project Manager, Kyrgyz Republic

Jian Qu, Vice President, China Development Institute

Qiam Mukhtar, Head of Results-based Monitoring, Afghanistan Ministry of Economy

Ananda Pokharel, MP Nepal

Caroline Heider, Director General, Independent Evaluation Group at the World Bank

Stephen Hutton, Senior Evaluation Officer, World Bank (Independent Evaluation Group)

Julio Berdegué, Principal Researcher, Latin American Center for Rural Development

Cheryl Gray, Director, Office of Evaluation and Oversight Inter-American Development Bank

Riccardo Polastro, Regional Evaluation Adviser, United Nations Children's Fund

Robert McLean, Senior Program Specialist, International Development Research Center, Canada

Andrew Brubaker, Evaluation Specialist, Independent Evaluation Department, Asian Development Bank

Khalid El-Harizi, Consultant and former IFAD staff

Key findings interviews with selected IFAD managers and staff in PMD and the Strategy and Knowledge Management Department.* ARRI 2012

* In 2013 the Strategy and Knowledge Management Department was renamed Strategy and Knowledge Department, or SKD

- (i) PMD managers now increasingly recognize IFAD's important role in policy dialogue. But there is a wide variation in views on what constitutes policy dialogue, with little consensus. So, there is a need for more clarity on IFAD's definition of policy dialogue at the country level;
- (ii) most managers seemed to agree that IFAD's comparative advantage in dialogue is to focus on issues arising from the experience of IFAD-funded projects;
- (iii) resource and skill limitations were cited by many managers regarding the lack of success in policy dialogue;
- (iv) managers acknowledged that IFAD CPMs are unlikely to have the same degree of access to high-level policymakers as other IFIs on major sectoral issues;
- (v) the need for selectivity in the policy agenda was cited by several managers, given limited resources and institutional limitations such as lack of country presence in many countries.
- (vi) partnerships with other major players, especially multilateral development banks and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, are seen as critical to IFAD's ability to influence policy in the agriculture and rural sectors;
- (vii) direct supervision and implementation support have not been used adequately to promote policy dialogue, particularly if they are closely linked to project experiences;
- (viii) grants were acknowledged as potential tools for supporting policy dialogue, but their use has been limited (especially regional and global grants), partly because they are not sufficiently integrated into IFAD-supported country programmes;
- (ix) country presence (especially with outposted CPMs) is seen by most managers as a step that would improve IFAD's ability to at least participate in policy dialogue and occasionally lead it, as and where appropriate (e.g. in Ghana with an outposted CPM, where IFAD is now co-chair of the donor working group on agriculture).

IFAD and policy dialogue: Lessons learned¹

1. Based on more than thirty-five years' experience as a government official, IFAD staff member and consultant for several international financial and technical cooperation institutions, I would like to share some conclusions about policy dialogue between Latin American and Caribbean governments and IFIs, in particular IFAD.
2. Policy dialogue, from IFAD's point of view, can prompt countries to prioritize economic and social policies that favour rural poor people, IFAD's target group.²
3. One lesson learned is that governments with pro-poor policies that are distributional and inclusive are much more likely to engage in an intensive policy dialogue with IFAD and to adopt policies that favour the rural poor.
4. This tendency is seen both in countries with massive rural poverty and in others where rural poverty is minor. In my experience, the first group includes post-Sandinista Nicaragua; Brazil with its agrarian reform and Zero Hunger programmes; and post-civil war El Salvador – all of which have shown a strong inclination to agree with the policies deriving from IFAD's mandate. Among the second group of countries, there is a broad consensus with IFAD policy dialogue in the cases of Uruguay, since 2005; Argentina, since 2003; and Venezuela, from 1999 to the present.
5. In the case of Argentina, the country programme evaluation done in 2010 by the Independent Office of Evaluation (IOE) of IFAD concluded that as measured by the results obtained, policy dialogue represented the most successful aspect of IFAD-Argentina cooperation. As a result of this dialogue, the evaluation stated, IFAD had helped generate a national discussion on rural poverty and raise the visibility of smallholder farmers. In addition, IFAD had supported the Government in improving rural development institutions and their policies, including the creation of a Rural Development and Family Farming Secretariat reporting to the new Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries.
6. Experience shows, however, that many of IFAD's recommendations agreed upon within the policy dialogue framework – e.g. as part of the approval process for COSOPs – have not been taken into account when governments represented economic interests invested in macroeconomic policies running counter to the interests of the rural poor.
7. In Bolivia, for instance, IFAD strongly recommended the expansion of settlement programmes for poor campesinos from the highlands to the vast expanses of public land in tropical plains during a special programming mission in 1986. Instead, what followed was a massive concession of those lands to large landholders during the conservative-leaning governments of the 1990s. In the cases of Mexico, Colombia and Peru, policies on free food imports as part of a broader strategy to deregulate international trade had an adverse impact on the interests of smallholder farmers, generating higher levels of rural poverty and more than offsetting the benefits of investments made in their favour.
8. In many of these cases, macroeconomic policies contrary to the interests of poor rural people were backed by the recommendations of other IFIs, either

¹ Note contributed by Ruy de Villalobos, rural development expert and former IFAD country programme manager (CPM), former undersecretary of agricultural economy of Argentina and former IFAD consultant, to the evaluation synthesis on policy dialogue prepared by IOE. Of all the country portfolio evaluations conducted over the period from 2010 to October 2016, the only one given the highest rating of 6 by IOE for policy dialogue was the one for Argentina – the main experience on which this note is based. (Original note in Spanish).

² In addition to the allocation of investment funds to these groups, many other issues must be considered, such as policies on external trade, financing and credit, land, pricing, education and health care, labour markets, and so on. The configuration of prevailing policies may in fact conflict with the interests of rural poor people and more than offset the effects of decisions on allocating investment resources in their favour.

international or regional. In such situations, the scope of IFAD's policy dialogue is very limited as the other IFIs operate in multiple economic sectors and have much more influence on economic and social policy decisions than does IFAD.

9. In my experience, in such cases IFAD can at most carve out a niche for itself in poverty alleviation programmes targeting marginalized minorities such as indigenous people and women, but can do little to combat the massive harm caused by the implementation of such policies on the campesino majority.
10. I would note that in virtually all the countries IFAD is considered more flexible and less orthodox than other IFIs – giving it a comparative advantage to engage in more fluid and effective contacts for programme and policy design with government officials who are likely to defend the interests of poor smallholder farmers in their countries. And this can lead to positive action.
11. IFAD's objectives and approaches can enable officials and technicians from many countries to interact with other IFIs to achieve programme and project designs that are better aligned with the interests of the rural poor.
12. For instance, I recall that when I was Undersecretary of Agricultural Economy of Argentina, the Government was simultaneously launching a large-scale cofinancing operation between the World Bank and a regional IFI to provide credit for agricultural equipment to large producers in the Pampas region and IFAD's first operation in the country's disadvantaged north-east. Cofinancing was sought from the regional IFI for this operation but some of its staff members resisted since the IFI's policies did not prioritize smallholder producers. The cofinancing did in fact materialize, but only following unofficial communication with the regional IFI indicating that if it did not take part in the cofinancing the country would in turn not invite it to cofinance the larger operation in the Pampas region.
13. Another example is the Small Farmer Development Project (PROINDER) in Argentina, which was initiated by IFAD and the World Bank. The project was designed jointly by the two institutions. For budget reasons IFAD withdrew from cofinancing and the World Bank continued the operation, which lasted more than 15 years with two or three additional loans. Another example comes from Brazil, where state technicians in several north-eastern states placed a high value on IFAD's experiences elsewhere – in Bolivia and Peru – and this had an influence, albeit indirect, on the interaction between Brazil and the World Bank on the design of several projects, given the homogeneity, continuity and coordination of national technical staff.
14. Undoubtedly these experiences would be borne out further by a thorough survey of the evidence of policy dialogue where IFAD has had an influence on decision-making by the Government and other IFIs.
15. In short, it is important for IFAD to draw the lesson learned here: identify timely policy processes with a pro-poor orientation in order to intervene effectively and with sufficient resources to achieve greater impact on rural poor people. It is also important to systematize experiences where IFAD's approaches – whether formalized at the policy dialogue level, e.g. in COSOPs, or incorporated in specific programme and project designs – have been used by countries to guide their design of programmes with other IFIs.

PPAs and PCRVs whose rating for “institutions and policies” is 4 or more, and which correspond to CPEs since 2010 with a rating for policy dialogue of 4 or more

Country	Year	Type of evaluation	Title	CPE rating for policy dialogue	Rating for institutions and policies
Argentina	2009	PPA	The Argentine Republic: Rural Development Project for the Northeastern Provinces (PRODERNEA)	6	6
	2013	PCRv	The Argentine Republic: Rural Development Project for the northwest Provinces (PRODERNOA)		4
Bangladesh	2012	PPA	Microfinance and Technical Support Project (MFTSP)		5
	2014	PPA	Microfinance for Marginal and Small Farmers Project (MFMSFP)	4	5
	2015	PCRv	Market Infrastructure Development Project in Charland Regions (MIDPCR)		4
Brazil	2011	PPA	Sustainable Development Project for Agrarian Reform Settlements in the Semi-Arid North-East (DHCP)	4	5
	2015	PPA	Gente de Valor - Rural Communities Development Project in the Poorest Areas of the State of Bahia		4
India	2013	PPA	National Microfinance Support Programme (NMSP)	4	5
	2015	PPA	Livelihoods Improvement Project in the Himalayas (LIPH)		4
Madagascar	2009	PPA	Republic of Madagascar: Upper Mandraré Basin Development Project – phase 2 (PHBM II)	5	5
	2015	PCRv	Republic of Madagascar: Rural Income Promotion Programme (PPRR)		4
Niger	2014	PCRv	Projet de Promotion de l'Initiative Locale pour le Développement à Aguiè (PPILDA)	4	4
	2015	PCRv	Initiative de Réhabilitation et de Développement Agricole et Rurale-Renforcement des Capacités Institutionnelles (IRDAR-RCI)		5
Uganda	2011	PPA	Vegetable Oil Development Project (VODP)	4	5
	2012	PPA	Area-Based Agricultural Modernization Programme (AAMP)		5

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<http://dfat.gov.au/aid/how-we-measure-performance/ode/odepublications/Pages/policy-dialogue.aspx>.
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International Fund for Agricultural Development
Via Paolo di Dono, 44 - 00142 Rome, Italy
Tel: +39 06 54591 - Fax: +39 06 5043463
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