

Kyrgyz Republic
Country Strategy and Programme Evaluation
Validation workshop (Virtual)
1 March 2023
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Words count: 1.050 words

1. I would like to start by thanking all stakeholders who played a very active role in this comprehensive Evaluation, starting with the Kyrgyz Government which provided regular feedback and which actively collaborated during the field mission. My gratitude also goes to the Independent Office of Evaluation colleagues for the very fruitful teamwork as well as the constructive and candid assessment of the portfolio, which offers very hands-on recommendations for the way forward.
2. As Mrs Dina Saleh, NEN Regional Director alluded in her opening statement, this Country Strategy and Programme Evaluation has been very timely. As a matter of fact, while the draft evaluation report has already been duly considered during the consultation with national stakeholders in the context of the IFAD National Strategy Completion Review mission last year, the main report will directly feed the design of the new Country strategic opportunities programme (the COSOP) that is scheduled at the end of March;
3. In terms of main conclusions from the execution of the past COSOP covering the period 2018-22, I would like to highlight some particularly insightful lessons learned:

- a) To start with, it has been noticed that the focus of the IFAD-funded projects on a few selected and important sectors such as pastures and livestock enabled IFAD to adopt a long-term programmatic approach. This was critical given the need for development of the policy and regulatory framework, establishing the institutional mechanisms and capacity building;
 - b) Second, it emphasized that any effective policy reform needs a clear strategic vision and commitment by Government, supported by stability to pursue and implement well thought-out and strategic sectoral approaches overtime. It is a fact that these policy reforms do require considerable downstream investments in institutional capacity building and technical assistance, supported by medium to long-term sectoral strategies at national level;
 - c) Another instructive lesson was that the expectation that access to financial services will be provided to projects beneficiaries by a range of programmes financed by other development partners or financing institutions does not materialise in the absence of strong arrangements on the ground. It also calls for concrete mitigation measures to face possible economic downturn as recently experienced with the worldwide pandemic and the highly disruptive war in Ukraine.
4. Now thinking forward, we are thrilled to have the new COSOP design mission end of this month, during which the agreed upon priorities with the Kyrgyz Government will be strongly considered. More specifically, priority areas identified in the strategy and that are well aligned with IFAD's strategic priorities

will include poverty reduction, environmental sustainability, climate resilience and access to markets. The COSOP will also examine the extent to which institutional reforms in the country since 1991 have addressed key development challenges and will support the current agrarian policy that focuses on systematic and consistent improvement in economic growth, poverty alleviation and efficient management of the land and water resources in the country;

5. As you may know, one of the outcomes from this Evaluation is the signature of the Agreement at Completion Point (ACP) between IFAD and the Kyrgyz Government. This agreement contains recommendations based on the evaluation findings and conclusions presented in the Evaluation report. It also proposes follow-up actions as agreed by IFAD and the Government. I would like to stress that the signed ACP will be submitted to the IFAD Executive Board as an annex to the new country strategic opportunities programme for Kyrgyzstan end of 2023;
6. In a nutshell and as briefly presented by Mrs Fumiko Nakai, the main recommendations emerging from the Evaluation revolve around key actions such as:
 - (i) The need to conduct a diagnostic analysis of rural poverty and livelihoods to inform the pro-poor targeting of the new investment project. This will allow to articulate the additionality and impact pathways for the rural poor. Concretely, the focus of IFAD and public sector support should be on how to facilitate the participation of poorer households in priority clusters, for example, by strengthening inclusive multi-stakeholder platforms, or enabling them to improve their productive

capacity and practices, or even build their business orientation and skills. Also, the opportunity to facilitate the use of remittance in-flows for productive investment in value chains (for something else than purchasing more animals), could also contribute to reducing the pressure on pastures;

(ii) Second, the focus on consolidating the achievements in pasture management and veterinary services and their sustainability. It was acknowledged that important progresses were made in policy and legislative frameworks as well as institutional development (for instance on community-based pasture management and private veterinary services). It is therefore crucial to ensure their effective implementation, compliance and enforcement. To do so, strategies need be developed and acted on to address the gaps in a number of areas, such as: (i) promoting more sustainable management of pasture resources; (ii) disincentive to large herd ownership; or (iii) the timely payment of pasture fees by all. Moreover, the importance of securing continuous funding for vaccination and treatment programmes for key animal diseases could not be overemphasized, as a failure in this could easily jeopardize the progresses made thus far;

(iii) Finally, about the strengthening of the approach to supporting gender equality and women's empowerment. As a matter of fact, activities to address gender inequality require more facilitation and hands-on support in order to overcome the social and

gender constraints, including the promotion of women economic empowerment in other value chains. As the use of quotas for women participation has proved insufficient, it is important to replicate the successful experience with the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) and the Business Action Learning for Inclusion (BALI) methodologies as it is the case in the ongoing Access to Market Project, but also in future investment projects. The objective is to find cost-effective solutions towards the diversification of activities providing more opportunities for women's economic empowerment (this includes for instance processing and value addition in livestock value chains, poultry, gardening, and off-farm income generating activities).

7. It is on these constructive recommendations that I would like to conclude my intervention by once again thanking both the Kyrgyz Government and the Independent Office of Evaluation in IFAD for the work undertaken, and the instructive Evaluation report that will undoubtedly pave the way to more relevant and impactful development initiatives in the rural Kyrgyzstan.

8. Thank you.