



Working  
for a world  
without hunger

Pour un monde  
libéré  
de la faim

Trabajando por  
un mundo liberado  
del hambre

نحو عالم  
متحرر من الجوع

## INTRODUCTION

This issue of *Hunger Notes* presents the major findings of the Rapid External Assessment of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) conducted in the spring of 1994 at the request of IFAD's Governing Council. The independent three-person team of development experts who led the assessment were chosen by IFAD's board from each of the three groups of nations defined in IFAD's structure of governance: (a) developed countries which belong to the OECD [Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development]; b) developing countries which belong to OPEC; and (c) other developing countries. The Rapid External Assessment's chief authors are Ivan Head of Canada (Chairman), Ali A. Attiga of Libya, and Martin Enrique Pineiro of Argentina.

This assessment is important for a number of reasons. First, it is an evaluation of a development institution and its program. Too often, development institutions think of evaluation only as what you do to someone else. When a man bites a dog, that's news; and when a development institution not only evaluates itself but even publishes the evaluation, that's news, too. Especially when the evaluation provides an honest critique as this one does.

Project-level evaluations are very important in themselves and also, in this context, as building blocks for an understanding of the development institution and its programs. There is still much to be done in this area regarding all development institutions, IFAD too, as the Rapid External Assessment points out. Evaluations of the major development institutions are just as necessary as project evaluations. Yet, they are either not done at all, or they are inac-

cessible to an audience beyond the institution itself. *Hunger Notes* will pursue the topic of evaluation again in future issues.

A second reason why this evaluation is important has already been touched on -- the need to make evaluations publicly available. People do have the right to know. We are talking about institutions that dispose of billions of dollars of other peoples' money. They also play a key role in the "process of development" by which hundreds of millions of people are trying to increase their incomes and escape desperate poverty. Recognizing this, we must realize how very important it is to understand any such institution's policies and programs.

A third reason for presenting these passages from IFAD's evaluation is for the genuine spirit of evaluation they demonstrate, which makes the report a very interesting and refreshing read. It addresses the major issues facing IFAD, displays a solid knowledge of IFAD and of the rural communities IFAD serves, and offers astute assessments of those issues.

Finally, as one of the many development advocates who strongly supported IFAD in its early days when its very existence was threatened, I am pleased that it has done much to fulfill the hopes we had for it. As this report documents, IFAD works diligently to meet the needs of the rural poor throughout the developing world by providing them with cost-effective ways of overcoming hunger, poverty, and malnutrition.

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### Cover Photo:

A landless widow in Bangladesh receives a loan of 2500 Taka (\$139) under the Grameen Bank scheme with which she will buy a milch cow. In 1980, IFAD extended the Grameen Bank a loan of \$3.4 million, making IFAD the first international institution to recognize the potential of the Grameen Bank's innovative approach designed to bring credit to the rural poor, especially women and landless workers previously overlooked by formal banking institutions. The approach is based on forming small groups to guarantee loans of as little as \$50. IFAD extended two more loans (\$23.6 million in 1985 and \$8 million in 1990) to help the Grameen Bank become a financially independent and viable bank. By the end of 1992, Grameen Bank had 1,015 branches operating in over 30,000 villages with a total membership of more than 1.42 million rural poor borrowers. Each borrower owns shares in Grameen Bank.