

Priority Areas for Action towards Promoting the Sustainability of Rural Poor Organizations

The following recommendations have been put forward to address the abovementioned issues and challenges. These are drawn from the IFAD Regional Workshop held in September 2007 in Bangkok, Thailand; an e-discussion on RPO sustainability supported by IFAD through its Knowledge Networking for Rural Development for Asia/Pacific Region (ENRAP) Program, and convened by ANGOC from 26 February to 16 April 2007; and a meeting of IFAD PDs in February 2007 in Manila, Philippines.

PROJECT DESIGN

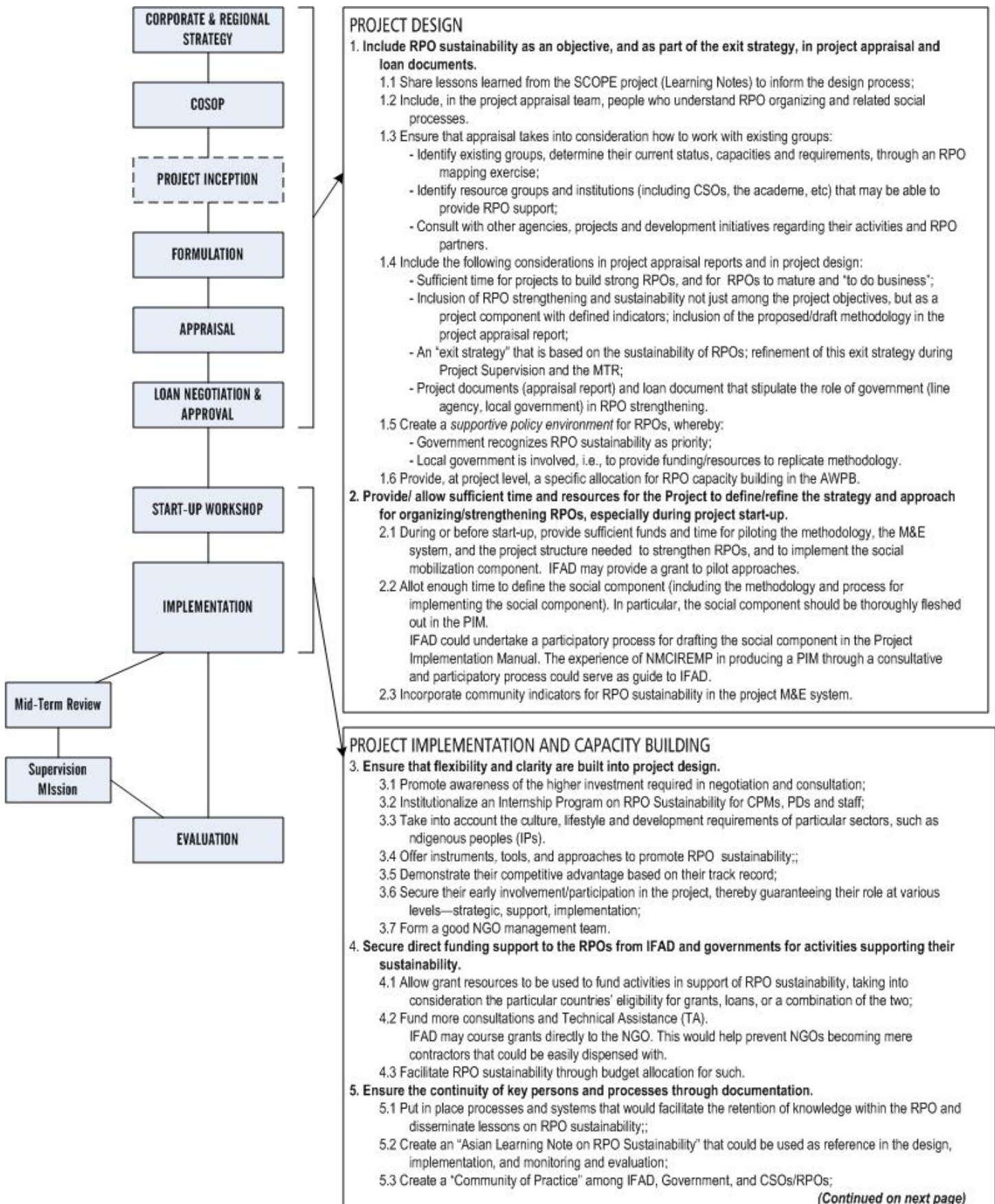
1. **Include RPO sustainability as an objective, and as part of the exit strategy, in project appraisal and loan documents.**

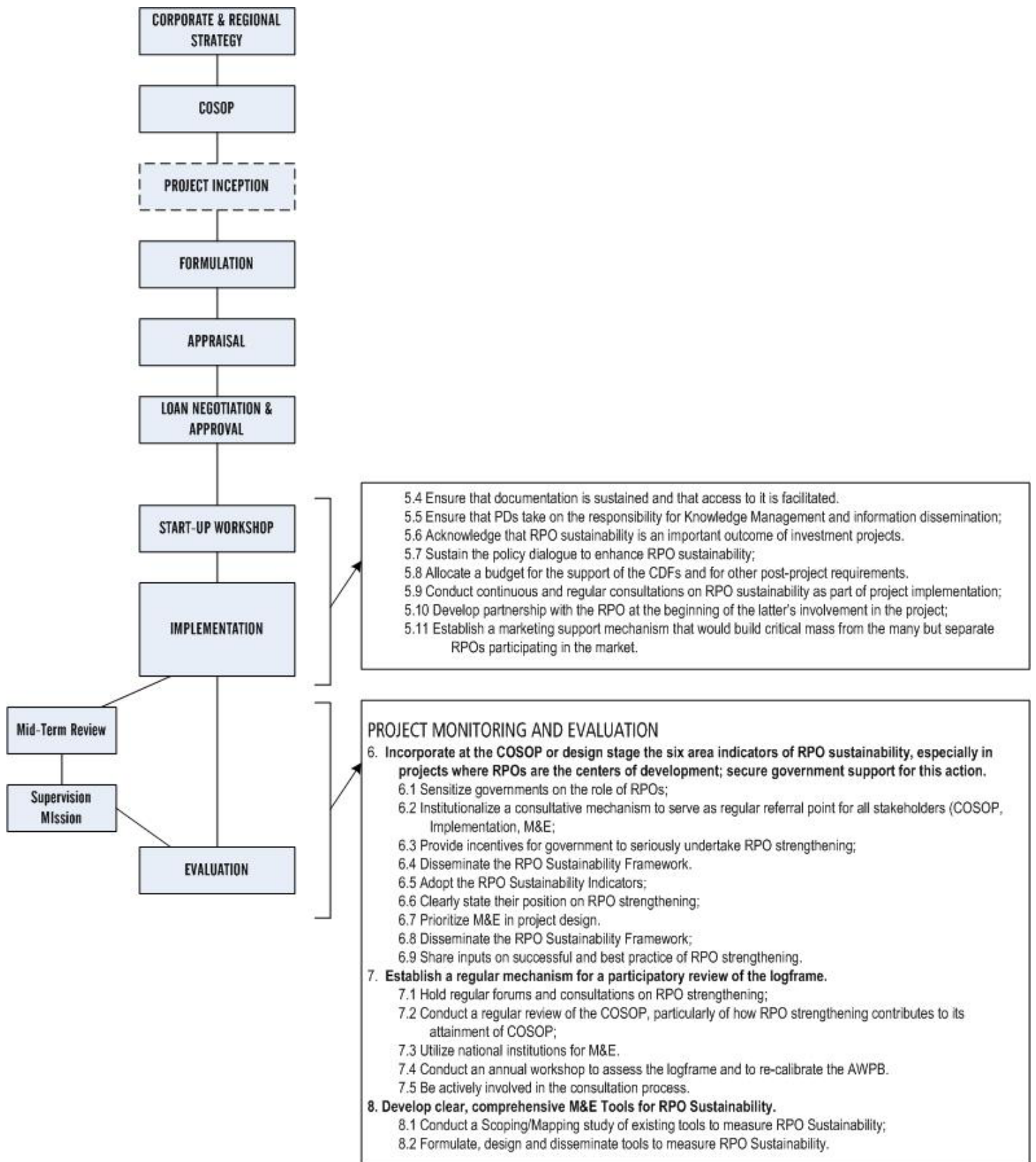
For IFAD:

- 1.1 Share lessons learned from the SCOPE project (Learning Notes) to inform the design process;

- 1.2 Include, in the project appraisal team, people who understand RPO organizing and related social processes.
- 1.3 Ensure that appraisal takes into consideration how to work with existing groups:
- ▶ Identify existing groups, determine their current status, capacities and requirements, through an RPO mapping exercise;
 - ▶ Identify resource groups and institutions (including CSOs, the academe, etc) that may be able to provide RPO support;
 - ▶ Consult with other agencies, projects and development initiatives regarding their activities and RPO partners.
- 1.4 Include the following considerations in project appraisal reports and in project design:
- ▶ Sufficient time for projects to build strong RPOs, and for RPOs to mature and "to do business";
 - ▶ Inclusion of RPO strengthening and sustainability not just among the project objectives, but as a project component with defined indicators; inclusion of the proposed/draft methodology in the project appraisal report;
- ▶ An "exit strategy" that is based on the sustainability of RPOs; refinement of this exit strategy during Project Supervision and the MTR;
 - ▶ Project documents (appraisal report) and loan document that stipulate the role of government (line agency, local government) in RPO strengthening.
- For IFAD-Supported Projects/with Government as lead:
- 1.5 Create a *supportive policy environment* for RPOs, whereby:
- ▶ Government recognizes RPO sustainability as priority;
 - ▶ Local government is involved, i.e., to provide funding/resources to replicate methodology.
- 1.6 Provide, at project level, a specific allocation for RPO capacity building in the AWPB.
- 2. Provide/ allow sufficient time and resources for the Project to define/refine the strategy and approach for organizing/strengthening RPOs, especially during project start-up.**
- For IFAD:
- 2.1 During or before start-up, provide sufficient funds and time for piloting the methodology, the M&E system, and the project structure needed to

Figure 1. RPO Strengthening in IFAD's Project Cycle





strengthen RPOs, and to implement the social mobilization component. IFAD may provide a grant to pilot approaches.

2.2 Allot enough time to define the social component (including the methodology and process for implementing the social component). In particular, the social component should be thoroughly fleshed out in the PIM.

IFAD could undertake a participatory process for drafting the social component in the Project Implementation Manual. The experience of NMCIREMP in producing a PIM through a consultative and participatory process could serve as guide to IFAD.

For IFAD-supported projects/with Government as lead:

2.3 Incorporate community indicators for RPO sustainability in the project M&E system.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING

3. **Ensure that flexibility and clarity are built into project design.**

For IFAD:

3.1 Promote awareness of the higher investment required in negotiation and consultation;

3.2 Institutionalize an Internship Program on RPO Sustainability for CPMs, PDs and staff;

3.3 Take into account the culture, lifestyle and development requirements of particular sectors, such as indigenous peoples (IPs).

For CSOs:

3.4 Offer instruments, tools, and approaches to promote RPO sustainability;;

3.5 Demonstrate their competitive advantage based on their track record;

3.6 Secure their early involvement/participation in the project, thereby guaranteeing their role at various levels—strategic, support, implementation;

3.7 Form a good NGO management team.

4. **Secure direct funding support to the RPOs from IFAD and governments for activities supporting their sustainability.**

For IFAD:

4.1 Allow grant resources to be used to fund activities in support of RPO sustainability, taking into consideration the particular countries' eligibility for grants, loans, or a combination of the two;

4.2 Fund more consultations and Technical Assistance (TA).

IFAD may course grants directly to the NGO. This would help prevent NGOs becoming mere contractors that could be easily dispensed with.

For Government:

4.3 Facilitate RPO sustainability through budget allocation for such.

5. Ensure the continuity of key persons and processes through documentation.

For IFAD:

5.1 Put in place processes and systems that would facilitate the retention of knowledge within the RPO and disseminate lessons on RPO sustainability;;

5.2 Create an "Asian Learning Note on RPO Sustainability" that could be used as reference in the design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation;

5.3 Create a "Community of Practice" among IFAD, Government, and CSOs/RPOs;

5.4 Ensure that documentation is sustained and that access to it is facilitated.

For Government:

5.5 Ensure that PDs take on the responsibility for Knowledge Management

and information dissemination;

5.6 Acknowledge that RPO sustainability is an important outcome of investment projects.

For Government and IFAD:

5.7 Sustain the policy dialogue to enhance RPO sustainability;

5.8 Allocate a budget for the support of the CDFs and for other post-project requirements.

For All Stakeholders:

5.9 Conduct continuous and regular consultations on RPO sustainability as part of project implementation;

5.10 Develop partnership with the RPO at the beginning of the latter's involvement in the project;

5.11 Establish a marketing support mechanism that would build critical mass from the many but separate RPOs participating in the market.

PROJECT MONITORING AND EVALUATION

6. Incorporate at the COSOP or design stage the six area indicators of RPO sustainability, especially in projects where RPOs are the centers of development; secure government support for this action.

For IFAD:

6.1 Sensitize governments on the role of RPOs;

6.2 Institutionalize a consultative mechanism to serve as regular referral point for all stakeholders (COSOP, Implementation, M&E);

6.3 Provide incentives for government to seriously undertake RPO strengthening;

6.4 Disseminate the RPO Sustainability Framework.

For Government:

6.5 Adopt the RPO Sustainability Indicators;

6.6 Clearly state their position on RPO strengthening;

6.7 Prioritize M&E in project design.

For CSOs:

6.8 Disseminate the RPO Sustainability Framework;

6.9 Share inputs on successful and best practice of RPO strengthening.

7. Establish a regular mechanism for a participatory review of the logframe.

For IFAD:

7.1 Hold regular forums and consultations on RPO strengthening;

7.2 Conduct a regular review of the COSOP, particularly of how RPO

strengthening contributes to its attainment of COSOP;

7.3 Utilize national institutions for M&E.

For Government:

7.4 Conduct an annual workshop to assess the logframe and to recalibrate the AWPB.

For CSOs:

7.5 Be actively involved in the consultation process.

8. Develop clear, comprehensive M&E Tools for RPO Sustainability.

For CSOs:

8.1 Conduct a Scoping/Mapping study of existing tools to measure RPO Sustainability;

8.2 Formulate, design and disseminate tools to measure RPO Sustainability.