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## **Minutes of the 130<sup>th</sup> session of the Evaluation Committee**

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### **Technical questions:**

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## Minutes of the 130<sup>th</sup> session of the Evaluation Committee

1. The deliberations of the Evaluation Committee at its 130<sup>th</sup> session – held both in presence and virtually on 5 September 2025 – are reflected in the present minutes, which have been approved by the Committee and shared with the Executive Board for information.

### **Agenda item 1: Opening of the session**

2. The session was attended by Committee members representing Egypt, Finland, Germany, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Kingdom of the Netherlands, Nigeria and Switzerland, and observers representing Algeria, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Sweden and United States. Moreover, the session was attended by the Director, Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) (remotely); the Deputy Director, IOE; the Managing Director, Office of Development Effectiveness; the Associate Vice-President, Department for Country Operations; the Managing Director, Office of Technical Delivery; the Secretary of IFAD; and other IFAD staff.
3. The Chairperson, Dr Yaya O. Olaniran (Nigeria), informed the Committee that he was unable to attend the session in person and that, with the agreement of the Committee, Ms Erma Rheindrayani (Indonesia) would preside over the session. As there were no objections from the Committee, Ms Rheindrayani assumed the role of Chairperson.
4. The Chair welcomed the representatives of Egypt, Finland and Germany, who were participating in the Evaluation Committee for the first time.

### **Agenda item 2: Adoption of the agenda (EC 2025/130/W.P.1)**

5. The Committee adopted the agenda as contained in document EC 2025/130/W.P.1 (to be revised as EC 2025/130/W.P.1/Rev.1), with the addition of an item under other business providing an update on the provisional agenda for the 131<sup>st</sup> Evaluation Committee session scheduled for 6 November.

### **Agenda item 8: Preview of the results-based work programme and budget for 2026, and indicative plan for 2027–2028 of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (EC 2025/130/W.P.7)**

#### Key messages:

- Members strongly supported IOE's learning-oriented approach, endorsing the use of evaluations as a tool to foster continuous improvement across IFAD's operations and strategic decision-making.
- Members endorsed the proposed work programme and provided input on the parameters for the corporate-level evaluations on human resources management, supplementary funds, and IFAD's work in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.
- Bearing in mind the ongoing UN80 Initiative, an efficiency lens should inform IOE's approach to undertaking the evaluations foreseen in its work programme.

6. Evaluation Committee members welcomed the preview of the IOE results-based work programme and budget for 2026, and indicative plan for 2027–2028, as contained in document EC 2025/130/W.P.7 and highlighted several key points.
7. The corporate-level evaluation (CLE) on supplementary funds was regarded as timely and important, with calls for further information on decision-making processes, donor influence, the trade-offs, impact on thematic orientation and core resources. On a related note, one member suggested that the evaluation look into the impact of additional climate contributions. The CLE on IFAD's human resources policy framework was also welcomed and IOE noted the request to review the

recalibration exercise and focus on efficiency, particularly in light of the ongoing UN80 Initiative and the opportunities presented by greater collaboration through shared services and partnerships with other United Nations agencies. Members would have the opportunity to review the approach papers for both evaluations. The thematic evaluation of IFAD's engagement with the private sector and the CLE on information and communications technology for corporate processes and programmatic support, both scheduled for 2028, were also considered important. In discussing the subregional evaluation on conflict-affected and fragile contexts in the Near East and North Africa, members stressed the importance of clearly distinguishing between the two contexts and looked forward to an analysis of the persistently low efficiency ratings in conflict-affected settings, which may, however, not result in reduced effectiveness.

8. Members welcomed IOE's strengthened focus on learning and endorsed its approach to ensuring that evaluations contributed meaningfully to continuous improvement across IFAD's activities. Additionally, members sought clarification on exchange rates and budget utilization related to staff costs.
9. IOE highlighted its conservative staffing approach, noting that the modest increase was supported by the integration of artificial intelligence and a capable team, allowing operations to remain within budgetary limits. IOE reassured the Committee of its readiness to manage a significant increase in workload and emphasized its continued focus on learning, supported by enhanced engagement processes.
10. IOE committed to reverting to the Committee as regards the exchange rate implications for its budget submission, with flexibility for adjustments, as well as the rationale for staff cost differences between tables 3 and 5.

**Agenda item 7: 2025 President's Report on the Implementation Status of Evaluation Recommendations and Management Actions (PRISMA) + IOE comments (EC 2025/130/W.P.6 + Add.1)**

Key messages:

- The Committee welcomed the PRISMA's enhanced focus on learning, and the use of digital technologies and artificial intelligence, while underscoring the need for strengthened monitoring and evaluation and full and timely implementation of recommendations.

11. The Committee expressed appreciation for the PRISMA and the comments provided by IOE thereon. Members welcomed Management's commitment to strengthening monitoring and evaluation efforts. The recently established Office of Development Effectiveness was actively prioritizing this goal, with efforts under way to increase resources and build internal capacity. Management reaffirmed the value of digital tools and artificial intelligence, noting the Vice-President-led operational agility initiative aimed at streamlining processes and leveraging technology. Members further welcomed the strengthened emphasis on learning, particularly through the introduction of the PRISMA tracker.
12. Members sought clarification on the reasons behind the declining rate of fully implemented recommendations. In response, Management elaborated on the challenges related to implementing multiple sub-items bundled into many recommendations, and committed to accelerating implementation in a manner that was both timely and relevant for the institution. Management also noted that some recommendations involved cyclical actions tied to future project designs or the development of new country strategies. In response to a query regarding IFAD's support to upper-middle-income countries approaching graduation, Management indicated that under the Fourteenth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources (IFAD14),

new tools and instruments would be explored with a view to strengthening IFAD's offer in this regard.

**Agenda item 3: 2025 Annual Report on the Independent Evaluation of IFAD (ARIE) + Management's response (EC 2025/130/W.P.2+ Add.1)**

Key messages:

- While acknowledging positive trends in relevance and innovation, members raised concerns regarding declining performance in gender equality and women's empowerment, noting the need for more robust gender analysis during project design, dedicated budget allocations and enhanced internal capacity to support gender-responsive outcomes.
- Members noted the challenges regarding sustainability of benefits and encouraged long-term follow-up evaluations – potentially 15 to 20 years post-completion – to better understand the enduring impact of IFAD interventions.

13. Members welcomed the ARIE and Management's response thereto. The comprehensive analysis presented in the report, particularly of the positive long-term trends in relevance and innovation performance, was appreciated. Nevertheless, members expressed concern over the declining proportion of well-performing projects in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment and encouraged IFAD to strengthen gender analysis during project design, ensure adequate budget allocations and enhance internal gender expertise.
14. Sustainability of results was identified as a significant challenge, with several members noting persistently low ratings in this area. Suggestions included implementing follow-up evaluations 15 to 20 years after project completion to evaluate the enduring impact of interventions. Government commitment was also recognized as key to long-term sustainability.
15. Regarding data and evaluation methodologies, members questioned the reliance on simple averages for performance reporting, given the wide variation in project sizes. They recommended adopting sensitivity analyses or weighted averages to more accurately reflect performance. Additionally, they emphasized the need to revisit project design and the structure of project management units, particularly in fragile contexts, to enhance efficiency and long-term sustainability. Members also highlighted the importance of non-lending activities – such as partnership-building, private sector engagement and public-private collaborations – and encouraged more consistent and comprehensive reporting on these initiatives.
16. Management acknowledged the oversight in not including a response to the findings on sustainability of benefits but mentioned that IFAD was looking into the use of tools such as geographic information systems and synthetic cohort analysis to assess long-term community impacts. Management emphasized the importance of strategic selectivity and resource allocation, particularly in fragile contexts, and highlighted the need to balance efficiency with operational realities.
17. Management stressed the shift towards integrating sustainability throughout the entire project lifecycle, considering exit strategies from the design phase and conducting robust midterm reviews to facilitate course correction when needed. In-country presence was also key to ensuring sustained impact, as was the recently approved multiphase adaptive programme approach which allowed for a longer-term approach to projects. Larger, integrated projects tended to garner greater government ownership and visibility, which further enhanced sustainability, although it was often challenging to convince governments of the need to borrow for institutional strengthening or capacity-building. Management outlined concrete actions undertaken to address sustainability, including the rollout of a sustainability

action plan, specialized training for staff and project management units, and the establishment of a fragility unit to adapt interventions to challenging environments. These initiatives reflected a broader commitment to building institutional capacity, scaling up successful approaches and achieving long-term development outcomes.

18. Noting that the mainstreaming theme of gender had the most ambitious target, Management detailed efforts to improve gender outcomes by implementing differentiated indicators, undertaking more robust analyses and providing targeted support to project management units.
19. In response to queries regarding the use of simple averages, IOE explained that this has been a long-standing practice, aligned with the methodologies employed by the Evaluation Cooperation Group. However, consideration would be given to assessing the impact of project size on performance. Management clarified that each project was assessed individually based on its specific objectives. IOE acknowledged the importance of revisiting older projects to evaluate long-term impacts, noting that while this would be valuable, such efforts would require careful planning and would have budget implications. IOE reiterated its commitment to enhancing the learning dimension of the ARIE, including exploring the potential of artificial intelligence to better leverage evaluation data in future editions.

**Agenda item 4: 2025 Report on IFAD's Development Effectiveness (RIDE) + IOE comments (EC 2025/130/W.P.3 + Add.1)**

Key messages:

- Members welcomed the progress in aligning IOE and Management ratings, emphasizing the importance of consistent institutional messaging and clearer data to enhance credibility.
- Noting the use of simple averages, some members called for a more nuanced analysis based on disaggregated data and advanced analytical approaches that better reflected complex realities and identified drivers of inefficiency.
- Deliberations on results reporting could be streamlined by combining consideration of reports, particularly of the RIDE, the Report on IFAD's Mainstreaming Effectiveness (RIME) and the impact assessment report, which were prepared by Management.

20. Members welcomed the RIDE and IOE's comments thereon, including the narrowing gap between IOE and Management ratings, and expressed appreciation for Management's willingness to enhance collaboration with IOE in this area. Additionally, members supported IOE's recommendation to better align data discrepancies to improve credibility and emphasized the importance of maintaining consistent institutional messaging of IFAD's impact.
21. While members acknowledged that differences in evaluation periods could contribute to variations in results, queries were raised regarding the observed downward trends in gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as the effects of delayed project start-ups, and stressed the importance of stepping up efforts on sustainability, while also looking at resilience and nutrition. Members also noted that weighted averages may offer more accurate insights than simple averages and requested clarification on whether Management concurred with IOE's assessment of efficiency challenges.
22. Management acknowledged that moving beyond simple averages would better reflect the underlying realities, noting that such an exercise was undertaken annually through the corporate portfolio stocktake. Given IFAD's business model, efficiency ratings were influenced by the performance of governments, project directors and project management units, and methodological issues with scoring.

For example, project extensions – often necessary due to external factors – can adversely affect efficiency ratings.

23. Management stressed the importance of realistic project design and implementation regardless of context and highlighted the positive impact of decentralization and in-country staffing. Management committed to a deeper analysis of the drivers of efficiency, recognizing its close relationship with effectiveness, and outlined plans to support the entire project cycle through enhanced quality assurance in the coming year.
24. Referencing the recommendation to combine the RIME and the RIDE, Management recalled that the RIME had previously been included as an annex to the RIDE but had been removed at the request of members as the document had become too lengthy. Management expressed no objections to the recommendation to merge the two documents moving forward.
25. IOE supported members' observations that reliance on averages could mask important nuances, underscoring the need for disaggregated data – an effort that IOE was actively pursuing in collaboration with Management – to enhance clarity and consistency in messaging and reporting. Regarding efficiency, IOE highlighted that since IFAD operated primarily through government systems, current assessments largely reflected the performance of project management units. Given that decentralization was still in progress and capacity-building required time, IOE urged patience in interpreting results, as the scale of operations may not yet be sufficient to give rise to tangible results.

**Agenda item 5: 2025 Report on IFAD's Mainstreaming Effectiveness (RIME) + IOE comments (EC 2025/130/W.P.4 + Add.1)**

Key messages:

- There was broad agreement on the value of consolidating the RIME and the RIDE, recognizing that integration would enhance clarity, reduce duplication, and support a more holistic and intersectional analysis of mainstreaming themes.
- Noting weaker performance in the mainstreaming themes of nutrition and gender equality and women's empowerment, members stressed the need for improved targeting strategies and monitoring systems, advocating for more nuanced, disaggregated and outcome-focused indicators to better inform decision-making and accurately measure development impact.
- The importance of internal capacity-building and institutional strategies to ensure mainstreaming themes are effectively embedded across project design and implementation was highlighted.

26. Members welcomed the RIME and IOE's comments thereon and expressed support for merging the RIME and RIDE, which would enhance clarity, reduce redundancy and promote more coherent discussions. While some acknowledged the original rationale for separating the reports, reintegration would promote efficiency and better reflect the interconnectedness of mainstreaming themes.
27. Members emphasized the critical importance of enhancing data quality and strengthening monitoring systems, noting existing data gaps in areas such as nutrition. They emphasized the need for more qualitative assessments to gain a comprehensive understanding and advocated for disaggregated, outcome-oriented data. Additionally, members stressed the importance of implementing sustainable capacity-building initiatives and structured training programmes to ensure that mainstreaming topics were effectively integrated into project design and execution.
28. Regarding gender equality and women's empowerment, members observed that targets were often not met but questioned whether this reflected issues with

impact or the achievability of the targets themselves. Some noted that field visits and evaluations showed meaningful impacts on women, suggesting that low performance figures may not fully capture the reality. Additionally, there was interest in exploring the intersections between mainstreaming themes – such as gender, nutrition and Indigenous Peoples – through an intersectional lens. Queries were raised regarding gaps in technical expertise during supervision missions and how IFAD allocated resources for thematic staffing, particularly given its reliance on supplementary funds.

29. Management expressed support for merging the RIME and RIDE reports, highlighting that this integration would provide a more comprehensive overview and enhance the ability to address intersectionality effectively. Management also underscored the importance of a holistic approach to the mainstreaming themes and committed to engaging in internal discussions to identify the most effective way to proceed.
30. Regarding staffing and supervision missions, Management clarified that due to resource constraints thematic experts could not be deployed to every mission. However, alternative mechanisms were in place, including targeted country visits by specialists and broader institutional efforts to embed mainstreaming responsibilities across all operational staff. Each region had designated leads in each mainstreaming area, and regional action plans were used to address thematic gaps more strategically.
31. Concerning data and indicators, Management acknowledged the progress made in nutrition monitoring through household-level indicators such as Minimum Dietary Diversity for Women (MDD-W) and elaborated on ongoing efforts to improve disability-disaggregated data, particularly in post-conflict contexts. Management noted that it was in the process of developing robust outcome indicators for youth and Indigenous Peoples, particularly concerning job creation. Additionally, Management noted that the upcoming IFAD14 Results Management Framework would provide an opportunity to revisit and refine targets and indicators, ensuring that they were both ambitious and achievable.

**Agenda item 6: IFAD12 Impact Assessment Report + IOE comments  
(EC 2025/130/W.P.5 + Add.1)**

Key messages:

- Members recognized IFAD's impact assessments as particularly valuable for reporting results and outcomes to national parliaments, especially in the context of replenishment discussions.
- Tier II indicators were highlighted as particularly useful, with members encouraging continued reporting on these given their clarity and effectiveness in illustrating tangible development outcomes.

32. Members expressed appreciation for the report, IOE's comments thereon and the clear and comprehensive presentation, welcoming the shift towards a stronger learning orientation. They commended efforts to align certain methodological aspects and to improve the communication of IFAD's work to a broader audience. The increasing alignment between IFAD and IOE on impact assessments was noted as a positive development.
33. It was highlighted that IFAD's impact evaluations were highly valued by parliament due to their rigorous analysis, particularly the reporting on Tier II indicators. Members also commended the relevance of the report's findings related to income, production, market access and the critical need for transformation in specific areas.
34. Management acknowledged the considerable effort and costs associated with field reporting on the five indicators and emphasized the importance of ensuring that



these efforts yield meaningful value. Management also recognized existing limitations and committed to gradually phasing out practices that were not producing the desired results.

**Agenda item 9: Other business**

35. The Director, IOE, informed the Committee that a new item would be added to the agenda for the 131<sup>st</sup> session of the Evaluation Committee, scheduled for 6 November: the country strategy and programme evaluation (CSPE) for Mexico. This would be included alongside the existing agenda items. In this light, Management agreed to postpone the submission of the Mexico country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP) – originally scheduled for 2025 – to 2026, to allow the COSOP to incorporate and benefit fully from the insights and findings of the upcoming CSPE.

**Closure of the session**

36. The Committee was reminded that the Office of the Secretary would share the draft minutes of the session, inclusive of the key messages shared by Committee members, for approval. Once finalized, the minutes would be submitted to the Executive Board for information at its 145<sup>th</sup> session.