
Comments of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD on the approach paper of the third external peer review of IFAD's evaluation function

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Action: The Executive Board is invited to review the comments of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD on the approach paper of the third external peer review of IFAD's evaluation function.

Technical questions:

Indran A. Naidoo
Director
Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD
e-mail: i.naidoo@ifad.org

Mona Fetouh
Deputy Director
Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD
e-mail: m.fetouh@ifad.org

I. General observations

1. In December 2024, the Executive Board approved the undertaking of a third external peer review of IFAD's evaluation function. The first such review was conducted in 2009 and the second in 2019. The reviews have resulted in reports submitted to the Evaluation Committee and Executive Board.
2. The Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) welcomes the third external peer review (EPR) of IFAD's evaluation function and the approach paper prepared by the peer review panel. External peer reviews are an important practice in the evaluation community that allow for improved quality, relevance and utility of evaluation through a comprehensive independent review of an organization's evaluation architecture and practice. IOE believes that this EPR will promote accountability and learning to strengthen the role of evaluation in IFAD, with the ultimate goal of enhanced development effectiveness and rural transformation.
3. The peer review approach follows frameworks developed by the Evaluation Cooperation Group (ECG) of the multilateral development banks, the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) – all in which IOE is an active member. The frameworks represent best practice in evaluation norms and standards. Since the peer review panel is chaired by a senior member of the ECG and includes representatives from both UNEG and OECD-DAC, it reflects IFAD's hybrid nature as both a specialized United Nations agency and an international financial institution. IOE views the 2026 EPR as a critical exercise that reflects IFAD's commitment to reflection and improvement, and the considerable experience of the EPR panel will bring welcome lessons for improving IFAD's work.
4. The 2019 EPR was instrumental in strengthening IFAD's independent evaluation function. It reinforced IOE's independence to provide credible rigorous evaluations that contribute to the strengthening of IFAD programmes, strategies and policies. It led to the development of the Multi-Year Evaluation Strategy of IOE, IFAD's revised Evaluation Policy and its revised Evaluation Manual. It also helped to increase complementarities with the IFAD self-evaluation function, resulting in better collaboration, including a shared evaluation policy and manual.

II. Specific comments

5. The approach paper presents a comprehensive framework that addresses the key elements of IFAD's evaluation function, focused on the criteria of credibility, independence and utility. IOE particularly welcomes the lines of enquiry around the evaluation function and environment, quality, partnerships, utilization and complementarity.
6. As an input to the peer review process and in line with previous practice, IOE will complete a self-assessment exercise that includes an examination of the implementation status of the 2019 EPR recommendations.
7. IOE welcomes the peer review's inclusion of both independent and self-evaluation functions at IFAD. This offers an opportunity to bring a holistic lens to the Fund's evaluative evidence work. Self-evaluation evidence is a critical input to the work of independent evaluation, and strengthening the evidence architecture of IFAD is a key element of greater development effectiveness for the communities that IFAD serves.

III. Final remarks

8. IOE looks forward to participating in the next stages of this review and stands ready to provide all the support the panel may require.