
Management's comments 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 Management's comments on the approach paper of the third external peer review of IFAD's evaluation function.

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I. General observations

1. Management welcomes the 2026 external peer review (EPR) of IFAD's evaluation function and values the opportunity to comment on its draft approach paper. As the EPR will be conducted during the Consultation on the Fourteenth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources (IFAD14), the recommendations would be implemented during the IFAD14 period.
2. **IFAD has greatly benefited from the outcomes of the previous EPR, which took place in 2019.** The exercise proved extremely valuable in strengthening both the accountability and learning aspects of the evaluation function. The 2019 EPR findings informed IFAD's reform process, which was ongoing at the time, in particular the Operational Excellence for Results (OpEx) reform initiative, the business model of IFAD11 and the IFAD11 commitments.
3. **Building on the recommendations of the 2019 EPR, IFAD updated the mandate of its Evaluation Committee and produced the 2021 Revised IFAD Evaluation Policy and 2022 IFAD Revised Evaluation Manual.** These documents laid the foundation for a holistic view of the evaluation function in IFAD and established common evaluation goals, criteria and definitions. Since then, Management and the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) have worked together productively to refine the evaluation product mix and to improve timeliness. IFAD's Evaluation Committee has repeatedly praised the enhanced collaboration between Management and IOE and expressed its appreciation for the quality of documents produced on both sides. The Evaluation Committee also provided insightful feedback on evaluation products and processes.
4. **Based on the feedback received from IFAD's Evaluation Committee, as well as the findings from its self-evaluation system, Management has identified some areas that would benefit from further insight in the context of the 2026 EPR.** Findings stemming from the Report on IFAD's Development Effectiveness (RIDE) and the Annual Report on the Independent Evaluation of IFAD (ARIE) are complementary and mutually reinforcing, but not directly comparable. The disconnect between IOE and Management's ratings is mitigated by the presence of an overall positive correlation, but could be further reduced.
5. **The planned increase in the number of evaluations to be carried out between 2026 and 2028 raises the issue of Management's absorptive capacity.** Additional evaluations imply a heavier workload for staff in the Department for Country Operations, both in terms of supporting the evaluation process by providing the required inputs and data, and in terms of following up and reporting on recommendations once the evaluation has been finalized.¹ As Management operates in a zero-growth budget scenario, a more effective and efficient organization of work will be required to adequately support evaluations and provide quality evidence and data, as well as to monitor follow-up and reporting at the corporate level.
6. **Management is committed to a fruitful collaboration on the 2026 EPR,** with the aim of generating learning that addresses the above-mentioned gaps, enhances IFAD's independent and self-evaluation functions, and contributes to greater efficiency and effectiveness. In this context, Management's comments on the draft

¹ As noted by IOE in the [comments on the 2024 President's Report on the Implementation Status of Evaluation Recommendations and Management Actions \(PRISMA\)](#) and by Management in the [2025 PRISMA](#), ensuring follow-up quality requires an additional investment of time and resources by country teams, with support from headquarters.

approach paper are aimed at further enriching and sharpening the learning generated from this important exercise.

II. Management's comments on the draft approach paper

7. Management generally concurs with the evaluation framework set out in the approach paper. The evaluation questions are aligned with the evaluation policy principles of accountability and learning, and take into account the independence of IOE.
8. **The reforms spurred by the 2019 EPR have improved IFAD's self-evaluation processes and products.** The 2019 EPR recommendations led to better informed country strategic opportunities programme papers and project designs, in addition to corporate policies and strategies based on better evidence. Management has strengthened existing tools for supervision and completion and embedded them in the Operational Results Management System (ORMS). The restructuring policy and new flexibility mechanisms have increased proactivity, allowing for course adjustments during the project lifespan. Management also updated its project completion guidelines in 2022 to ensure consistency with the 2022 IFAD Revised Evaluation Manual. Notwithstanding the above, Management has identified a few key areas that continue to deserve attention and would benefit from further insight in the context of the 2026 EPR.
9. **Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) remains a key area for improvement, as highlighted by both self- and independent evaluations.²** While IFAD has carried out a number of initiatives aimed at improving M&E capacity at the project management unit level, its control over data quality remains limited. IFAD has developed extensive guidance materials and rolled out an organized capacity-building programme; yet follow-up on M&E matters within the institution is constrained by the lack of dedicated resources. Management suggests that the EPR examine the existing gaps in M&E capacity within the institution and its ability to support M&E processes at project management unit level. The EPR could also ascertain whether current supervision processes and templates could be fine-tuned to improve value for money and better support development effectiveness.
10. **Management suggests that the 2026 EPR look at the evaluation function holistically, including design and supervision in addition to completion.** Management sees an opportunity to sharpen the focus of evaluation tools at design and during supervision, to lay the groundwork for better evidence collection at completion, thus improving the accuracy of the assessment of projects' development effectiveness. This would also result in project supervision reports being better predictors of performance at completion, thus nurturing IFAD's proactivity and allowing for the efficient reallocation of resources within the portfolio. Another positive effect would be to streamline the workload required to prepare project supervision reports, shifting resources to implementation support as opposed to writing reports and negotiating ratings. This could also help to narrow down the disconnect between Management and IOE ratings.
11. **In addition, Management is committed to prioritizing a learning-oriented approach for impact assessments.** As mentioned in the IFAD12 Impact Assessment Report, the future of IFAD's impact assessment approach will be more learning-oriented. By repositioning impact assessments as instruments for continuous learning, IFAD will enhance its agility and effectiveness in delivering rural transformation. Projects undergoing impact assessments will be more strategically selected and designed to fill critical knowledge gaps. Proceeding with a

² See for example recent editions of the RIDE and PRISMA, as well as IOE's comments.

learning-focused agenda will support real-time learning, enable timely course corrections, and promote adaptive management for ongoing and future operations.

12. **The reforms spurred by the 2019 EPR also improved IFAD's independent evaluation processes and products.** Since 2019, the evaluation product mix has been better at responding to demand from regional and corporate divisions and has been timed to inform country and corporate strategies. The increased collaboration between Management and IOE has contributed to maintaining a high level of acceptance of IOE recommendations and has fostered better learning throughout IFAD.
13. **Management believes there is room for the EPR to examine the content and scope of recommendations.** As explained in the 2024 and 2025 PRISMA, recommendations have become longer and more complex than in past years, increasingly bundling several different but interconnected action points. This increases the complexity of implementing and reporting follow-up. With regard to scope, recommendations stemming from country strategy and programme evaluations sometimes relate to increasing country presence or investing in non-lending activities; however, decisions on these two areas are made at the corporate level and are tied to broader budget considerations.
14. Finally, Management would like to highlight that the timeline for the development of the 2026 EPR is challenging in view of the IFAD14 consultation process. Given the limitations on shifting the timeline to the end of 2026, Management would appreciate the EPR panel's collaboration in developing a joint workplan that allows for the efficient allocation of available resources during the process.
15. Management is committed to contributing to the EPR with solid evidence to nurture the learning aspect of the evaluation function, while maintaining high accountability standards and a sound value-for-money approach. Management looks forward to a fruitful collaboration with the external peer review panel and IOE in the development of the EPR.