
Minutes of the 132nd session of the Evaluation Committee

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Minutes of the 132nd session of the Evaluation Committee

1. The deliberations of the Evaluation Committee at its 132nd session – held both in presence and virtually on 18 March 2026 – 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 from Egypt, Finland, Germany, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Kingdom of the Netherlands, Nigeria (Chairperson) and Switzerland. Observers were present from Canada and China. Moreover, the session was attended by the Director, Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE); the Associate Vice-President, Corporate Services Department; the Managing Director, Office of Development Effectiveness; the Regional Director, Near East, North Africa and Europe Division; the Director, People and Culture Division; the Regional Director, Asia and the Pacific Division (remotely); the Regional Director, East and Southern Africa Division (remotely); the Head of Hub and Country Director, West and Central Africa Division (remotely); the Director, Global Engagement, Partnership and Resource Mobilization Division (remotely); the Secretary of IFAD; and other IFAD staff.
3. Mr Tran Quoc Phuong, Vice-Minister for Finance of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, and Governor of IFAD, provided remarks virtually on the country strategy and programme evaluation (CSPE) for Viet Nam.
4. Mr Ibrahim Elmi Mohamed, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Agriculture, Water, Fisheries, Livestock and Fisheries Resources of the Republic of Djibouti and Mr Abdou Ali Idris, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Djibouti to IFAD provided remarks virtually on the CSPE for Djibouti.
5. Mr Neto Halwabala, Counsellor Political and Administration and Alternate Permanent Representative of the Republic of Zambia and Ms Nkumbu Nalwimba, First Secretary Agriculture and Alternate Permanent Representative of the Republic of Zambia attended in presence. Mr Halwabala provided remarks on the CSPE for Zambia.
6. Mr Ngor Ndiaye, Ambassador of the Republic of Senegal in Italy, Alternate Governor, and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Senegal to the United Nations Institutions based in Rome attended in presence and provided remarks on the CSPE for Senegal.

Agenda item 2: Adoption of the agenda (EC 2026/132/W.P.1)

7. The Committee adopted the agenda as contained in document EC 2026/132/W.P.1. (to be revised as EC 2026/132/W.P.1/Rev.1), with the addition of the following items under other business: an overview on the recent Artificial Intelligence Impact Summit and an update on the Evaluation Advisory Panel and the IOE programme of work; and an update on the external peer review of IFAD's evaluation function, including a review of the implementation of the IFAD Evaluation Policy and related governance matters, along with the timeline for review at IFAD's governing body meetings.

Agenda item 3: Country strategy and programme evaluation for the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam (EC 2026/132/W.P.2 + Add.1)

Key messages:

- The Committee welcomed the positive performance of IFAD's programme in Viet Nam, highlighting its effective implementation, prudent resource use, and tangible results in rural poverty reduction, gender equality and women's empowerment, nutrition, youth engagement and sustainability.

- Members noted that the upcoming country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP) offered an opportunity to clarify IFAD's niche and value added in Viet Nam, as a country transitioning to upper-middle-income status, and to address challenges including the need for greater private sector engagement, systemic monitoring and evaluation (M&E) gaps, limited financing for "soft" components, and the need for gender-transformative and disability-inclusive approaches.
- Members emphasized the importance of capturing long-term results and lessons learned, strengthening knowledge-sharing, leveraging peer learning, and scaling up South-South and Triangular Cooperation.

8. The Evaluation Committee welcomed the CSPE for Viet Nam, covering the period 2012–2024, as contained in document EC 2026/132/W.P.2; the agreement at completion point signed by IFAD and the Government, contained in the addendum; and the intervention delivered by the government representative.
9. Members welcomed the findings of the CSPE, citing solid results in effectiveness, impact, sustainability, innovation and rural poverty reduction, and noting the strong engagement with women's organizations and integration of thematic priorities such as gender, nutrition and youth. Despite challenges experienced during the COSOP period due to a shift in Viet Nam's approach to official development assistance, IFAD was recognized for delivering tangible results.
10. Members noted the forthcoming strategic review as an opportunity to reassess IFAD's positioning in a rapidly evolving context and clarify its niche and value added as Viet Nam transitions to upper-middle-income status. Key challenges identified included the need for increased private sector engagement in remote areas, systemic weaknesses in monitoring and evaluation, limited financing for soft components, and gaps in implementing gender-transformative and disability-inclusive approaches, including the limited use of tools such as the Gender Action Learning System.
11. Members emphasized the importance of: capturing long-term results, welcoming IOE's approach of revisiting earlier projects; strengthened learning and knowledge-sharing; systematically disseminating lessons; promoting peer learning among Member States; and enhancing complementarities between sovereign and non-sovereign operations. It was suggested that the IFAD Governing Council and other events could provide an important platform for showcasing success stories and facilitating exchange of lessons learned among Member States. Such knowledge-sharing should be actively pursued particularly for successful programmes such as that in Viet Nam.
12. With respect to private sector engagement, IOE noted that constraints largely stemmed from the high-risk, low-return conditions in IFAD's target areas, but acknowledged the progress made in areas such as applied research and pest management. On monitoring and evaluation, IOE emphasized the need to move beyond project-level systems towards more programmatic and institutional approaches.
13. Management welcomed the positive feedback and confirmed that preparation of the COSOP was under way and would reflect Viet Nam's transition to upper-middle-income status and a shift towards more strategic engagement beyond project-based support. Management emphasized the importance of mobilizing additional resources – particularly climate finance – to sustain capacity-building and targeting, while prioritizing expanded private sector engagement in value chains and market access, strengthened de-risking approaches, enhanced national M&E capacity, and scaling up of South-South and Triangular Cooperation and knowledge management. IFAD was proactively engaging with multilateral development banks to collaborate, and pool resources and expertise with a view to enhancing national M&E capacity.

Agenda item 4: Country strategy and programme evaluation for the Republic of Djibouti (EC 2026/132/W.P.3 + Add.1)

Key messages:

- Members noted challenges in IFAD's operations in Djibouti, including M&E gaps, limited baseline data, partner performance issues, limited local ownership, capacity constraints, and sustainability risks. At the same time, members welcomed the Government's engagement, the potential for complementary financing and positive results in rural livelihoods. Members emphasized the importance of data-sharing, learning, peer collaboration and stronger coordination among United Nations agencies, and the need for clearer strategies to enhance IFAD's impact and sustainability.

14. The Evaluation Committee reviewed the CSPE for Djibouti, covering the period 2010–2024, as contained in document EC 2026/132/W.P.3/Rev. 1,¹ the agreement at completion point signed by IFAD and the Government, contained in the addendum; and the intervention delivered by the government representative.
15. Members expressed concern regarding the challenges faced in IFAD's operations in Djibouti, including the M&E gaps and limited baseline data, which hindered assessment of income and nutrition outcomes. Concern was also expressed regarding partner performance, limited local ownership, capacity constraints, and sustainability risks, particularly for water infrastructure. It was noted that while the agreement at completion point had been posted only a day prior to the session, the Government agreed with all the recommendations.
16. At the same time, members acknowledged several positive elements, including the Government's willingness to engage and the potential to mobilize complementary financing. Members called for clearer strategies to strengthen IFAD's impact and sustainability, encouraged greater collaboration with countries facing similar challenges, and emphasized the importance of data-sharing, learning and stronger coordination among United Nations agencies. Members sought the Government's views on the recommendations, particularly concerning coordination gaps across government levels and with resource partners and United Nations agencies.
17. In response, the government representatives emphasized that projects were demand-driven and guided by local and national committees. Concrete measures taken by the Government to strengthen monitoring and coordination were highlighted, including the establishment of a monitoring department in the Ministry of Agriculture. While acknowledging challenges, IFAD-supported projects were recognized for strengthening rural livelihoods, land management, fisheries and infrastructure. The Government's commitment to improved implementation was reiterated.
18. IOE noted that Djibouti's small size and challenging context constrained IFAD's operations and that impact measurement was limited by data gaps and changing indicators. Nonetheless, IOE reaffirmed the relevance of IFAD's continued engagement and highlighted positive results in microfinance and water projects.
19. Management noted the difficulties of operating in hard-to-reach areas, as per IFAD's mandate, and underscored the importance of IFAD's role given Djibouti's vulnerability to climate change and food insecurity. Management highlighted the positive results achieved in income generation, infrastructure, irrigation and fisheries.
20. Management emphasized a shift in the new COSOP towards an approach that is more holistic and value chain oriented, with stronger coordination between central and decentralized levels and greater private sector engagement. Measures to

¹ Rev.1 is pertinent to the English version only.

address M&E and coordination gaps were outlined, including strengthened systems, automated data tools, baseline data for all projects, and improved oversight. The COSOP also emphasized closer collaboration with United Nations agencies and international financial institutions (IFIs) such as the African Development Bank, the World Bank, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and confirmed IFAD's active role in the United Nations Country Team.

Agenda item 5: Country strategy and programme evaluation for the Republic of Zambia (EC 2026/132/W.P.4 + Add.1)

Key messages:

- Members welcomed IFAD's tangible contributions to rural communities in Zambia, including provision of digital financial services, progress on gender equality, and support for vulnerable groups, while noting challenges such as limited collaboration with FAO, weak institutionalization, high management costs, and gaps in gender mainstreaming.
- Members highlighted the need for stronger coordination among United Nations agencies, earlier and more strategic private sector engagement, better use of disaggregated data, effective integration of projects into COSOPs, and dedicated nutrition and gender indicators.

21. The Evaluation Committee welcomed the CSPE for Zambia, covering the period 2014–2024, as contained in document EC 2026/132/W.P.4; the agreement at completion point signed by IFAD and the Government, contained in the addendum; and the intervention delivered by the government representative.
22. Members acknowledged IFAD's tangible contributions to rural communities in Zambia, in particular regarding inclusive rural finance (digital financial services), progress on gender equality and women's empowerment, and its plans to strengthen the targeting of women, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. Members commented on the mixed performance in terms of partnerships with NGOs and United Nations agencies, and the persistent challenges, including limited collaboration with FAO, weak institutionalization beyond rural finance, high management costs, and insufficient resources and expertise for gender mainstreaming within programme management units (PMUs).
23. Members acknowledged IFAD's good working relationship with the World Food Programme (WFP) and called for stronger coordination with the United Nations system, particularly with FAO, and more strategic private sector engagement and better use of disaggregated data. Clarity was sought on the distinction between equitable private sector partnerships and local market development, and on the consistency of IOE's evaluation tools and indicators across countries. Management clarified that approaches to private sector engagement were context-specific, ranging from promotion of inclusive rural finance, to market-led development of supply chains, to the integration of private actors as service providers in project delivery. With regard to engagement with FAO, Management clarified that some engagement had commenced in relation to joint resource mobilization. Regarding methodology, IOE clarified that, while all evaluations adhered to IFAD's Evaluation Manual, methodologies and tools were tailored to each country context, also in recognition of the distinct dynamics of fragile versus non-fragile settings. Management also clarified that new projects designed in the portfolio were containing management costs below the 15 per cent allowable threshold. Management further noted that the mobilization of supplementary funds and grants was contributing additional resources for technical assistance and capacity-building. Institutionalization was being promoted by encouraging the uptake of project interventions by government agencies and the private sector in the early stages of implementation of new projects.

24. Members emphasized the need to better leverage lessons from differentiated country approaches, strengthen integration of projects into COSOPs, and engage the private sector earlier in the project cycle. They also underscored the importance of dedicated indicators to ensure accountability for nutrition and gender integration throughout implementation and requested clarification on how Management would ensure that PMU teams are adequately qualified and supported. Regarding PMU expertise, Management clarified that gender and social inclusion experts were now fully integrated into ongoing programmes in Zambia and that dedicated support was provided to the PMU by IFAD nutrition specialists, with linkages established to relevant government agencies. Private sector engagement was a key feature of the new Financial Inclusion for Resilience and Innovation Project (FIRIP), which was working with financial service providers, and was being cofinanced by the private sector. Moreover, Zambia was also a target country for the regional non-sovereign operation under the Africa Rural Climate Adaptation Finance Mechanism (ARCAFIM).
25. IOE noted that despite the limited institutionalization of some programme approaches, several promising innovations had been identified, including pluralistic extension services. In value chain development, projects such as the Smallholder Agribusiness Promotion Programme (SAPP) and the Enhanced Smallholder Agribusiness Promotion Programme (E-SAPP) piloted effective models for smallholder integration and agribusiness development. However, some initiatives (E-SAPP) had been discontinued prematurely, thereby limiting results.
26. Management emphasized close collaboration with Rome-based agencies and other partners, including through the Global Gateway initiatives supported by IFAD, FAO and the European Union. Other examples were the joint work being done with WFP in such areas as livestock insurance, mechanization and rural finance. Management noted that the Zambia country programme under the Twelfth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources (IFAD12) had been discontinued due to restructuring, high management fees, debt distress leading to limited fiscal space, and COVID-related disruptions. The current programme benefited from streamlined costs and stronger coordination with the Ministries of Agriculture, Finance and National Planning, and Fisheries and Livestock.
27. Management also highlighted achievements of earlier interventions, including the digitalized agricultural e-voucher programme, livestock disease management and insurance, innovations in rural finance and the launch of FIRIP under IFAD13 to expand private sector engagement, blended finance and first-mile service delivery. Management reaffirmed efforts to systematize private sector engagement across value chains, develop non-sovereign operations, focus investments along economic corridors, and advance a market-driven food systems approach.

Agenda item 6: Country strategy and programme evaluation for the Republic of Senegal (EC 2026/132/W.P.5 + Add.1)

Key messages:

- Members welcomed IFAD's strong performance in Senegal and recognized the progress in inclusivity, especially for young people, and the positive impact of decentralization in programme implementation.
- Members called for a stronger systems approach and comprehensive value chain strategies covering production, processing and consumption. They also wished to see more attention accorded to youth employment, local economic benefits, downstream opportunities, human resource management, knowledge management, market orientation, export potential, climate adaptation and sustainability of results.

28. The Evaluation Committee welcomed the CSPE for Senegal, covering the period 2014–2025, as contained in document EC 2026/132/W.P.5, Management's oral

response, and the intervention delivered by the government representative. It was noted that the agreement at completion point signed by IFAD and the Government had not been received in advance of the session.²

29. Members commended the balanced assessment offered by the CSPE, which both recognized progress achieved and identified areas for improvement. Members highlighted advances in inclusivity, particularly for young people, and the potential role of the diaspora in supporting IFAD's work in Senegal. Decentralization was seen as having a positive impact on implementation, offering lessons for other contexts. Senegal's performance and innovative programmes were acknowledged as among the strongest in West Africa.
30. At the same time, members called for a strengthened systems approach and a comprehensive value chain strategy to avoid fragmented interventions. Members wished to see a greater focus on knowledge management, partnerships, market orientation, export potential, climate adaptation and sustainability. Members highlighted underutilized downstream opportunities and the need for concrete strategies to promote youth employment and local economic benefits. Issues in human resource management such as staff turnover and procedural delays were also noted. While acknowledging that the programme was aligned with national priorities, some members asked whether the lack of explicit reference to the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) would be addressed in the next COSOP.
31. IOE noted that decentralization had improved IFAD's capacity to monitor and adjust projects, but that overall performance continued to be affected by factors including larger portfolio sizes, complex implementation contexts and external shocks, including COVID-19.
32. Management acknowledged the overall balance and usefulness of the evaluation, noting that the programme's progression through distinct phases reflected a dynamic process that may prove difficult to capture when reviewing the assessment.
33. Management confirmed that the conclusions and recommendations were being integrated into the new COSOP in close consultation with the Government. Youth employment and rural job creation, strengthened United Nations partnerships and cross-cutting priorities – including climate adaptation and sustainability – would be fully embedded in the programme.
34. Management also confirmed alignment with government priorities on food sovereignty, local production for local markets and support to the recently approved food sovereignty programme. Management also noted that IFAD's programmes were consistent with regional commitments such as CAADP through alignment with national priorities and regional frameworks.

Agenda item 7: Approach paper for the corporate-level evaluation of IFAD's management of human resources (EC 2026/132/W.P.6)

Key messages:

- Members welcomed the first corporate-level evaluation of IFAD's management of human resources as an important step, appreciating its focus on organizational culture, workforce planning, decentralization, recruitment, talent retention, learning, and emphasis on accountability, as well as data analytics utilization and technology availability.
- Members emphasized the need for human resource management to be closely aligned with IFAD's mandate and supported by a coherent forward-looking strategy; regular evaluations to track progress; broader

² The document was signed by the Government on the day before the 132nd session of the Evaluation Committee.

benchmarking beyond the United Nations system and financial institutions; and analysis of interactions between headquarters, and regional and country offices.

35. Members welcomed the approach paper for the first corporate-level evaluation of IFAD's management of human resources as timely, relevant and an important first step. They expressed appreciation for the proposed approach, which considered organizational culture, drew on previous evaluations (including those on decentralization) and incorporated key informant interviews and e-surveys. Members emphasized that the evaluation should focus on key structural and strategic issues – including recruitment and selection processes to attract and retain talent and technical expertise across decentralized offices. The evaluation should also emphasize accountability, data analytics utilization and technology availability.
36. Several members emphasized the value of conducting such evaluations regularly to establish a solid baseline and track progress. Moreover, members called for human resource (HR) management to be more closely aligned with IFAD's core mandate rather than solely with evolving strategic priorities, and for the development of a coherent, forward-looking HR strategy. Members also highlighted the importance of broader benchmarking beyond the United Nations system and financial institutions, and of analysing interactions between the headquarters, and regional and country levels to better understand decision-making and workforce effectiveness. Clarification was sought on whether Member States would be included as stakeholders in the consultation process. IOE confirmed that Member States' perspectives would be sought through separate consultations, while the primary focus remained on supporting IFAD Management in strengthening the internal management of human resources.
37. IOE confirmed that the evaluation scope would be refined to ensure a more focused approach, examining recruitment, workforce planning, and decision-making across organizational levels while ensuring alignment of HR management with IFAD's mandate. The evaluation would draw on international best practices and recent assessments carried out by other institutions and would also look at the impact of artificial intelligence.
38. Management welcomed members' guidance and confirmed alignment with the points raised, particularly on the importance of examining interactions between headquarters, and regional and country offices and the value added by benchmarking beyond the United Nations system and IFI arena. Management noted that recruitment was a priority and that work was already ongoing on HR reform within longer-term transformation agendas, linking workforce composition, cost-effectiveness and institutional skills and capabilities to IFAD's strategic priorities and future sustainability. With respect to institutional competitiveness and talent attraction and retention, Management noted that the overall fitness of the remuneration package for IFAD's business model was an important consideration even if formally excluded from the scope of the evaluation. The transformation plan would be shared with IOE to ensure maximum benefit from the scope and findings of the evaluation.

Agenda item 8: Corporate-level evaluation of the institutional and operational performance under IFAD11 and IFAD12 (EC 2026/132/W.P.7 + Add.1)

Key messages:

- Members welcomed the evaluation as a timely, comprehensive review of IFAD's performance, strategy and challenges, emphasizing realistic prioritization during replenishments, the central role of non-lending

activities, and the need to address capacity gaps in the areas of climate, gender and nutrition. In this regard, clear definitions, baselines and robust key performance indicators (KPIs) were considered important.

- Members highlighted the importance of simplifying project design, aligning objectives with staffing and implementation capacity, strengthening monitoring, evaluation and learning systems, and leveraging lessons for IFAD13 and IFAD14, including private sector engagement, outreach, lending in upper-middle-income countries and optimizing capital.

39. Members welcomed the evaluation as a timely and comprehensive assessment of IFAD's performance, strategy and challenges. While findings were aligned with existing knowledge, the evaluation offered valuable insights into IFAD's strengths, gaps and opportunities. Members underscored the need for realistic prioritization during replenishment consultations to ensure credible, costed commitments and were concerned that replenishment processes risked becoming overly ambitious and insufficiently prioritized. Members emphasized that addressing this concern would be a shared responsibility between Management and Member States. They also reaffirmed that non-lending activities were central to IFAD's comparative advantage and highlighted the importance of addressing capacity gaps, particularly in the areas of climate, gender and nutrition, through clear definitions, dedicated baselines and robust KPIs. These were priorities that should be embedded within the core budget as opposed to relying on supplementary funding.
40. Members emphasized the need to simplify project design, better align objectives and operations with staffing and implementation capacity, and strengthen monitoring, evaluation and learning systems to demonstrate tangible results. They welcomed progress on private sector engagement and noted that lessons from the evaluation should inform both IFAD13 and IFAD14, particularly in enhancing outreach, leveraging private sector operations, addressing lending constraints in upper-middle-income countries, and optimizing capital, including consideration of whether IFAD was fully utilizing its financial capacity within existing risk frameworks.
41. IOE welcomed the positive feedback from both members and Management and highlighted the benefits of decentralization, noting that the increased in-country presence of country directors had strengthened government engagement and enhanced IFAD's operational and evaluative capacity. While the costs of decentralization had resulted in reduced budgets for certain activities, and coordination challenges and continuing constraints in staffing and expertise in some contexts had been encountered, it was acknowledged that decentralization had yielded definite benefits, including improved local presence and programme oversight.
42. Management welcomed the evaluation and supported the recommendation to strengthen activity-based budget tracking and the need for streamlined and realistic commitment setting during replenishment cycles. While improvements to costing systems were ongoing, Management acknowledged the current limitations, and underscored the need to accelerate improvements in budget and resource tracking for more informed and effective decision-making.

Agenda item 9: Other business

43. The Director, IOE, provided an overview of the recent Artificial Intelligence Impact Summit, where IOE had shared insights on the use of technology and AI for development and humanitarian action. He also shared an update on the Evaluation Advisory Panel, which continued to provide independent guidance to strengthen IOE's evaluation work. On the IOE work programme, the Director informed members that following a thorough review of the project portfolio and consultation with the Latin America and the Caribbean Division, the upcoming project cluster

evaluation of agroecology practices in Latin America and the Caribbean would focus exclusively on Brazil and would inform a potential CSPE of Brazil. This would be discussed during upcoming work planning.

44. Furthermore, the Director, IOE, submitted the following statement for record based on his direct reporting and accountability to the Executive Board. It related to the work conducted and processes set out for the external peer review (EPR) of IFAD's evaluation function.

"The IOE Director has a clear responsibility to alert the Executive Board of Directors on any matters related to independence since IOE governance falls under the exclusive purview of the Board. This submission's timing seeks to be pre-emptive to ensure that the EPR of IFAD's evaluation policy is completed smoothly. As was the case in 2021, the IOE Director is responsible for revising the policy through an EPR and presenting it to the Board for approval based on Board inputs. Hence, in consultation with the Evaluation Committee, I began the process of setting up the EPR panel in 2024 with the terms of reference approved in 2025 and the panel addressing the Board in the same year. IFAD has a high-level panel conducting this delicate endeavour, drawn from all the key global evaluation networks – ECG, OECD, DAC and UNEG.³ The Board is central in providing IOE with directions for follow-up. Its Evaluation Committee makes recommendations on key matters related to governance, including recruitment. It consults with the entire Board on key matters of governance.

The panel has completed much of its evaluation work by now. In the remaining period, it will synthesize results and get feedback from the Board and Management on governance issues. The process also implies that a report will be shared with the Evaluation Committee at the June session and the Board at the September session. It would be important that the agreed process and timeline set out are used as decision-making opportunities to revise the current evaluation policy. IOE stands ready as a qualified resource to advise any parties along this highly strategic process, drawing from its 21 years of track record in performing independent evaluation at IFAD."

45. The Secretary of IFAD provided an update on the timeline for the consideration of the EPR report, noting that the draft report would be presented at the Committee's session in June rather than at the October session. It was expected that the draft report would be completed by the end of May and would be published shortly thereafter in English, with translations to follow. After review at the June session, the final report would be presented to the Board for consideration of recommendations at its September session. Members were reminded that final interviews with the EPR team were ongoing, and any remaining inputs should be submitted promptly to inform the draft report.

Closure of the session

46. 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 147th session.

³ Evaluation Cooperation Group, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Development Assistance Committee, United Nations Evaluation Group.