
Management's comments on the Report of the third External Peer Review of IFAD's Evaluation Function

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Action: The Executive Board is invited to review the Management's comments on the Report of the third External Peer Review of IFAD's Evaluation Function.

Useful references: IFAD revised Evaluation Manual – Part 1 ([EB 2022/135/R.29](#)).

Technical questions:

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Management's comments on the Report of the third External Peer Review of IFAD's Evaluation Function

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I. Introduction

1. Management welcomes the findings and recommendations set forth in the Report of the third External Peer Review (EPR) of IFAD's Evaluation Function. Consistent with IFAD's Evaluation Policy, the report encompasses IFAD's evaluation function in its entirety. The EPR plays a pivotal role in IFAD's ongoing process of strengthening the two independent yet mutually reinforcing pillars of self-evaluation and independent evaluation, while leveraging the use of evaluative evidence to maintain a high level of accountability and maximize learning.
2. Management appreciates the participatory approach adopted during the consultation process, which included feedback from IFAD's workforce both at headquarters and in the country offices, and the document's candour in presenting different perspectives. Management also appreciates the analysis and findings, which refer to issues substantiated through desk review and interviews, and suggest concrete initiatives for improvement.
3. **Management concurs with the overall findings presented in the report and its recommendations.** In line with Management's comments on the approach paper of the third EPR of IFAD's evaluation function¹ and the 2025 President's Report on the Implementation Status of Evaluation Recommendations and Management Actions (PRISMA),² the EPR offers important suggestions to fine-tune the evaluation product mix and the applicability of recommendations. To this end, Management confirms its full availability to continue collaborating with the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE). Management also supports the EPR's focus on areas where strengthened self-evaluation is of special importance. These include: addressing the challenges detected in monitoring and evaluation capacity; identifying practical means to foster better and deeper learning; and enhancing complementarity with independent evaluation. The remainder of this note provides further insight by Management on the EPR recommendations and conclusions, and suggestions for the way forward.

II. Management's perspective on the EPR recommendations

4. Management concurs on all the EPR recommendations, with alternative options suggested for specific parts of recommendation 2 (see para. 12) and recommendation 4 (see para. 19). Management is fully available to collaborate with IOE to implement the following recommendations.
5. **Recommendation 1. IOE should rebalance its product mix by improving selectivity, so that resources are focused on strategically chosen evaluations that enhance the usefulness of evaluation for timely and informed decision-making.**
6. **Management confirms its full availability to continue collaborating with IOE on the product mix.** Management greatly values the established practice of discussing the IOE work programme before its submission to the Executive Board and will continue to provide inputs. In addition, Management is available to work with IOE to identify effective ways of sharing information that is useful for planning, including on replenishment timelines, upcoming corporate milestones or emerging thematic areas of focus, as well as on country programme pipelines. Management

¹ EC 2025/131/W.P.4/Add.2.

² EB 2025/OR/11.

also welcomes the idea of synthesis studies or meta-analysis, which reduce the burden on staff involved while offering learning opportunities.

7. **Recommendation 2. Management should increase efforts to improve self-evaluation and together with IOE refine complementarity with independent evaluations, enabling stronger learning loops and more consistent use of evaluative insights in decision-making.**
8. **Management concurs on the importance of refining complementarity between self-evaluation and independent evaluation as a shared responsibility between Management and IOE.** The 2022 Evaluation Manual established common evaluation goals, criteria and definitions; however, a few details remain outdated since the start of the Thirteenth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources (IFAD13). To further improve consistency, Management is available to work with IOE to update the manual's evaluation criteria section, and to establish common guidelines that are specific to each criterion in order to distinguish among ratings across the scale. **This will contribute to strengthening the accuracy of self-evaluation, thus reinforcing its credibility and reducing the rating disconnect.** It will also contribute to increasing the accuracy of judgement, and consequently to better quality learning for country teams.
9. Regarding the EPR's proposal to improve division of labour and avoid overlaps, Management flags the importance of rationalizing field data collection for better leverage, especially with regard to data stemming from IFAD's impact assessments and core outcome surveys. IOE and Management could collaborate on harmonizing the methodology for data collection and storage; once this is done, data gathered for impact assessments and core outcome indicator reporting could also be used as a source for independent evaluation.
10. **IFAD's ongoing data governance work is a critical enabler to strengthen the evaluation function.** Building on its data governance policy approved in 2025, and its data governance action plan presented in 2026, IFAD seeks to build an environment in which data are robust, reliable and shared efficiently across both functions in the most cost-effective manner possible.
11. **Management also intends to leverage its Operations Academy to strengthen staff capacity in self-evaluation.** Management concurs with the EPR finding that more credible self-evaluation requires proper training and tutoring. Merely updating guidelines will not suffice. The Operations Academy is best positioned to produce training courses on monitoring and evaluation (M&E) or update existing ones based on demand. The academy is a key institutional mechanism that strengthens the operational capacities of country teams, technical experts and partners. In addition to its well-established internal learning system, IFAD is now rolling out the project management unit (PMU) academy programme, introducing a modern, user-centred and technology-enabled learning environment tailored to PMUs.
12. **Rather than introducing an additional follow-up assessment on self-evaluation, Management opts for continuing to integrate these aspects into its routine reports.** Management is committed to monitoring the progress on complementarity and on strengthening the self-evaluation system. These aspects are already regularly covered by established yearly or periodical reports and documents such as the Report on IFAD's Development Effectiveness (RIDE), PRISMA, Management's response to the Annual Report on the Independent Evaluation of IFAD (ARIE), and midterm reviews of IFAD's replenishments. Continuing this practice represents a more efficient use of budget than committing to additional studies, and allows for streamlining the number of documents submitted to Member States.

13. **Recommendation 3. IFAD should strengthen its learning culture by fostering closer collaboration between Management and the evaluation function, with the objective of improving the uptake and use of evaluation lessons in strategic and operational decisions.**
14. **Management concurs on the importance of fostering a learning culture,** including through improved collaboration with the independent evaluation function. The main areas for tighter collaboration are outlined under recommendation 2. In addition to these, Management concurs that timeliness of dissemination and the choice of communication channels are particularly important for uptake and learning. Management greatly values the learning opportunities offered by IOE's seminars on evaluations – which are generally very well attended - and will continue to collaborate with IOE to optimize timeliness and communication channels.
15. In addition, **Management will leverage the recalibrated structure of the Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) to promote a more enabling environment for learning.** Since its initial establishment, ODE has been further strengthened through an adjusted structure (effective January 2026), which has enhanced the integration of analytical, operational and learning functions. This ensures that knowledge and evaluative evidence are more systematically translated into policy guidance, investment decisions and operational delivery.
16. **Recommendation 4. IOE should increase the focus and clarity of its recommendations to strengthen their actionability and decision-making value.**
17. **Management concurs with the EPR's recommendation to make recommendations simpler, enhance their focus and reduce fragmentation.** Management supports the scheduling of technical meetings on recommendations to ensure understanding, in practical terms, of the implications and the way forward. Artificial intelligence tools will be helpful in capturing the main outcomes of such meetings, so they can be codified and made available to staff, thus countering the effects of staff turnover.
18. **Importantly, recommendations should consider budgetary aspects.** Management's view is that recommendations should begin to explicitly acknowledge budget implications when they are significant, or else offer examples of cost-neutral initiatives, including drawing on the experience of comparator organizations. This will help enhance transparency on the degree of implementation of recommendations and make the trade-off clearer. This also provides Member States with greater clarity as they will be advised of the choices to be made by Management and can provide informed guidance.
19. **Management supports the current practice of relying on ODE's arms-length quality assurance and IOE's independent review to assess recommendation uptake,** also leveraging the constructive dialogue established among the parties, rather than adding extra layers of verification mechanisms. Additional resources, where available, should be devoted to learning, as accountability is ensured through public dashboards such as the PRISMA tracker and documents such as IOE's comments on the PRISMA. Management will target budgetary resources at capacity-building for staff to undertake quality self-assessment and reporting, and strengthen their ability to leverage evidence for better project design and implementation, rather than opting for external verification of information that has already been validated by ODE and IOE.

20. **Recommendation 5. ODE and IOE should strengthen collaboration with relevant global initiatives³ on M&E capacity development to clarify roles, strengthen capabilities, and improve the decision-making value of monitoring and evaluation both internally and with country partners.**
21. **Management concurs on the importance of strengthening M&E capacity both at staff level and at PMU level.** The IFAD grant-funded Program in Rural Monitoring and Evaluation (PRiME) – Phase III has two objectives: (i) train IFAD PMU staff; and (ii) make the learning offer sustainable, in order to mitigate the negative effects of PMU staff turnover. PRiME is being implemented in collaboration with the Center for Learning on Evaluation and Results for Lusophone Africa and Brazil (CLEAR LAB), and implementing partners of the Global Evaluation Initiative. This complements ongoing efforts through the Operations Academy and regional capacity-building initiatives.
22. In addition, IFAD is collaborating with the World Bank and other multilateral development banks under the Project Implementation Units for Results (PIUnear) initiative, launched at this year's World Bank Spring Meeting. The initiative aims to enhance national M&E capacity-building efforts, and define a shared foundation of standards, competencies and learning for results for professionals working in development projects. It scales up the reach of IFAD's work on PRiME by leveraging learning materials and expertise to support learning and the strengthening of monitoring and evaluation capacity across institutions.
23. Ongoing capacity-building efforts are critical in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. IFAD's approach is differentiated in such contexts: project design is phased and sequential, with expectations calibrated accordingly.
24. **Recommendation 6. The Executive Board should reaffirm its commitment to the 2021 Evaluation Policy and safeguard the independence of IOE and the role of ODE by clarifying the annexes in the policy.**
25. **Management confirms its full availability to work together with IOE on refining the Evaluation Policy annexes** by clarifying ODE's role. ODE has been operational since 2025 and serves, among other functions, as the custodian of self-evaluation in the institution, and all collaboration between Management and IOE.

III. Conclusions

26. Management greatly appreciates the insights contained in the Report of the third External Peer Review of IFAD Evaluation Function and values the opportunity to share comments for the review of Member States. Management affirms its full respect for the role and independence of IOE, and stands ready to further its ongoing collaboration to address the valuable recommendations set forth in the report.

³ Like the Global Evaluation Initiative (GEI), including the Center for Learning on Evaluation and Results (CLEAR).