

Document: EC 2020/111/W.P.4/Add.1
Agenda: 5
Date: 16 October 2020
Distribution: Public
Original: English

E



Investing in rural people

Comments by the Senior Independent Advisors on the Draft Revised IFAD Evaluation Policy

Note to Evaluation Committee members

Focal points:

Technical questions:

Fabrizio Felloni
Interim Officer-in-Charge
Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2361
e-mail: f.felloni@ifad.org

Donal Brown
Associate Vice President
Programme Management Department
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2448
e-mail: d.brown@ifad.org

Sara Savastano
Director
Research and Impact Assessment Division
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2155
e-mail: s.savastano@ifad.org

Thomas Eriksson
Director
Operational Policy and Results Division
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2425
e-mail: t.eriksson@ifad.org

Dispatch of documentation:

Deirdre Mc Grenra
Chief
Institutional Governance and
Member Relations
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2374
e-mail: gb@ifad.org

Evaluation Committee — 111th Session
Rome, 22 October 2020

For: Review

Comments by the Senior Independent Advisors on the Draft Revised IFAD Evaluation Policy

By Alison Evans, Director-General and Vice President Evaluation, World Bank Group

1. The 2019 External Peer Review of the Evaluation Function of IFAD recommended that the Independent Office of Evaluation (IOE) and IFAD Management jointly revise the existing IFAD Evaluation Policy, for Board approval, to focus more strongly on: “strategic issues, provide greater institutional utility and value, and establish appropriate roles and responsibilities across the multiple components of IFAD’s evaluation systems”.
2. The draft revised Evaluation Policy fulfils this recommendation in the following ways:
 - a. It takes a holistic approach to evaluation, addressing the strategic relevance of both independent evaluation and self-evaluation to achieving greater development effectiveness in IFAD.
 - b. In line with international practices in evaluation, it establishes core evaluation principles that help ensure the quality and effectiveness of evaluation and commits to a Theory of Change linking the evaluation function to the intermediate and end goals of the Institution.
 - c. The draft Policy reaffirms the structural and functional independence of the IOE and it clarifies the separate but interrelated roles and accountabilities of the IOE, Management and the Executive Board in safeguarding the role and value contribution of evaluation in the Institution.
3. The draft Policy could be strengthened in the following ways:
 - i. The Policy is aspirational in articulating a Theory of Change setting out the expected contribution of independent and self-evaluation to enhanced operational and organizational performance and ultimately to the achievement of IFAD’s strategic goals. The enablers and assumptions make it clear that there is much to do to create the necessary conditions for the evaluation function to meet its desired objectives. As such, the document could be clearer that the Policy is seeking a shift in evaluation practice, behaviors and approaches to enhance IFAD’s culture of accountability, learning and results-orientation and that the Theory of Change identifies a number of critical pathways through which this can be achieved. The Theory of Change is a useful addition not because it describes *what is*, but because it identifies *what needs to happen* to strengthen the evaluation function and its role in enhancing development and organizational effectiveness. This could be made clearer.
 - ii. The Policy integrates the two main pillars of evaluation – Independent and Self-Evaluation – although the treatment of the two is currently unbalanced. Eight paragraphs are devoted to describing the system and practices of self-evaluation (paras 32-39), including some detail on methods, while just one paragraph is devoted to describing the purpose and practice of independent evaluation (para 40). While the Theory of Change is clear that both self and independent evaluation contribute to decision-making, learning and accountability, the description of independent evaluation is limited in this regard (and, further on, focused more on the rules surrounding appointment and termination of the IOE Director than on the substance of the function). More emphasis could be given to the role of independent evaluation in aligning its work program with the strategic priorities and accountability and learning needs of the institution, using a range of products and different formats to support learning at the levels of operations and Management, ensuring/tracking effective follow-up to evaluation recommendations and its role in informing

other actors such as representatives of beneficiaries and the general public. A stronger statement about the role of the IOE in strengthening the validity of self-evaluations through independent review and validation would also be in line with good practice.

- iii. The Policy is anchored in six core principles. For the most part these are consistent with international practice. I have two points of caution, however:
 - a. First, while collaborative working and engagement in the planning, selecting, implementing and disseminating evaluations are absolutely key, the concept of partnership is different and should not be conflated with or confused with collaboration between the independent evaluation unit and Management. Instead, I would recommend a separate section dealing with Partnership – which could focus on evaluation partnerships with recipients, stakeholders and other evaluation entities across the United Nations and International Financial Institutions system, plus IFAD’s support for evaluation capacity development.
 - b. Second, Value for Money/Cost Effectiveness are vitally important but are not an obvious *evaluation principle* as they should apply to all aspects of operational and non-operational work within the multilateral context. As is noted in the draft Policy, the cost-benefit of undertaking specific evaluations is often complex to establish ex-ante and this fact should not, by itself, deter the evaluation function from doing the right thing. Value for Money would sit better as a criterion for operationalizing the institutional framework for evaluation; a key tool for ensuring selectivity and the efficiency of resource use across all evaluation business lines.
- iv. The revised Policy has a section on Public Access which covers some aspects of disclosure rules. It would be clearer if this were a section dedicated to communication, disclosure and dissemination with a clear statement on access to information and related policies and to the importance of accessibility in the communication and dissemination of evaluation evidence. There should also be a stronger statement about the need for IOE to have unrestricted access to all information required to execute its work.
- v. As a general observation, the draft Policy could be tighter and less repetitive, particularly in the opening sections.