JLIFAD

Investing in rural people

Multi-Year Evaluation Strategy of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD

For: **Review**

Contents

Abbreviations and acronyms

ARRI	Annual Report on Results and Impact of IFAD Operations
DEF	Development Effectiveness Framework
CLE	corporate-level evaluation
CSPE	country strategy and programme evaluation
ECG-MDB	Evaluation Cooperation Group of the Multilateral Development Banks
ES	evaluation synthesis
IFAD12	Twelfth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources
IFI	international financial institution
IOE	Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
PCE	project cluster evaluation
PCRV	project completion report validation
PMD	Programme Management Department
PPE	project performance evaluation
PRISMA	President's Report on the Implementation Status of Evaluation Recommendations and Management Actions
RBA	Rome-based agency
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SKD	Strategy and Knowledge Department
SRE	subregional evaluation
TE	thematic evaluation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

Multi-Year Evaluation Strategy of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD

I. Background and context

1. **From the Revised IFAD Evaluation Policy to a multi-year strategy**. The 2019 external peer review of the IFAD evaluation function recommended that, in order to implement the Revised IFAD Evaluation Policy, the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) should prepare a multi-year evaluation strategy and revise the Evaluation Manual, in consultation with Management.

2. In April 2021, the Executive Board approved the Revised IFAD Evaluation Policy.[1] The policy covers the entire evaluation system at IFAD, including independent evaluation and self-evaluation. It establishes key principles for both and prepares the ground for enhanced collaboration between them. The policy also presents a theory of change highlighting how independent evaluation and self-evaluation can contribute to organizational and development effectiveness (annex I).

3. IFAD Management has undertaken a revision of the Development Effectiveness Framework (DEF) which, inter alia, lays the foundation for the self-evaluation system. The multi-year strategy of IOE and the DEF contribute to the strengthening of the IFAD evaluation function.

4. **The international agenda and IFAD's strategic directions**. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda highlighted the importance of IFAD's mandate of investing in rural people and enabling inclusive and sustainable transformation of rural areas, notably through smallholder-agriculture-led growth. IFAD's Strategic Framework 2016-2025 is closely linked to the SDGs.[2]

5. In line with the 2030 Agenda, the Strategic Framework committed to: (i) mobilizing substantially more funds and resources for investment in rural areas (*bigger*); (ii) strengthening the quality of IFAD's country programmes through innovation, knowledge-sharing, partnerships and policy engagement (*better*); and (iii) delivering development results in a cost-effective way that best responds to partner countries' evolving needs (*smarter*).

6. The Strategic Framework laid out three interlinked strategic objectives: (i) increase poor rural people's productive capacities; (ii) increase poor rural people's benefits from market participation; and (iii) strengthen the environmental sustainability and climate resilience of poor rural people's economic activities.

7. As reflected in the Report of the Consultation on the Twelfth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources (IFAD12), IFAD intends to take steps to double and deepen its impact through: (i) leadership in ensuring that global climate finance reaches small-scale producers and rural poor people, and that its focus on gender, nutrition, youth, indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities drives deeper impact; (ii) enhanced focus on addressing the drivers of fragility and on the poorest countries; (iii) stronger policy engagement and strategic partnerships; (iv) transformational country programmes delivered through enhanced institutional capacity and scaled-up financing; (v) strengthened financial architecture to scale up financing to all Member States; and (vi) a culture of results, innovation and scaling up.

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[1] https://webapps.ifad.org/members/eb/132/docs/EB-2021-132-R-5-Rev-1.pdf.
[2] The Strategic Framework makes specific reference to SDGs 1, 2, 5, 8, 10, 13 and 15.

8.   Evaluation (self and independent) will help to achieve these goals by contributing to the design of new initiatives and course correction.

9.   In 2019, IFAD 2.0 was announced,[3] which, inter alia, introduced instruments for non-sovereign lending and support to private sector operations. These operations will need to be evaluated as well.

10.   This multi-year evaluation strategy takes into account internal reviews and discussion within IOE, as well as consultations with IFAD Management and governing bodies. The preparation of this document has benefited from exchanges with the African Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank, as well as interactions with evaluation professional networks (Evaluation Cooperation Group of the Multilateral Development Banks [ECG-MDB], United Nations Evaluation Group, the Network on Development Evaluation of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD-DAC] and the Global Evaluation Initiative) and evaluation professional associations.

II. Purpose and objectives of the strategy 2022-2027

11.   The multi-year evaluation strategy provides the guiding framework for future IOE work programmes and a bridge between the Revised IFAD Evaluation Policy (2021 Evaluation Policy) and the annual work programmes. The strategy will span a period of six years: from 2022 to 2027 (IFAD12 and IFAD13). IOE will conduct a review at midterm, to reflect priorities that will be agreed in the context of IFAD13 as well as to learn from the experience of the first three years.

12.   This strategy helps operationalize the principles of the 2021 Evaluation Policy and provides guidance and stability over the medium term. IOE will continue to prepare an annual work programme and budget for discussion with the Evaluation Committee and Audit Committee, and seek approval of the work programme by the Executive Board and final approval of the budget by the Governing Council. The strategy defines key performance indicators (annex IV), which will also help measure progress and provide IOE with guidance.

13.   The **objectives of the strategy** support the theory of change of the 2021 Evaluation Policy (annex I). The aim is to make IOE's role more explicit in achieving the desired impact of the policy. The following actions are identified:

      (i)   Contribute to forging IFAD's corporate culture as a **transparent, learning-oriented and accountable organization** by providing IFAD's governing bodies, Management, governments and national development partners with assessments and knowledge that are critical to fulfilling the commitments made under IFAD11, IFAD12 and IFAD13.

      (ii)   Improve evaluation **coverage** and promote transformative evaluations that reflect the scale and scope of IFAD operations, ensuring methodological rigour, attention to inclusiveness and cultural responsiveness, flexibility and cost-effectiveness.

      (iii) Engage with Management, Member States and external partners to support evaluation capacity and use within and outside IFAD.

      (iv)   Retain and deepen IOE's position as an **internationally recognized leader** in the evaluation of rural development programmes, policies and strategies by further strengthening the relevance of its work, promoting innovative approaches

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[3] https://webapps.ifad.org/members/eb/128/docs/EB-2019-128-INF-4.pdf?attach=1.

and enhancing collaboration with other organizations, and with think tanks and universities.

III. Achieving the objectives: key actions to be taken

14. Achieving the multi-year strategy objectives will require specific action by IOE (see figure 1), namely: (i) establish general selectivity principles for evaluation topics; (ii) set directions for the IOE evaluation product range; (iii) collaborate with Management to help validate and support the self-evaluation function; (iv) step up IOE's partnerships for exchange of evaluation knowledge and practices, and cooperation in evaluation capacity development; and (v) raise the bar through enhanced quality, efficiency and effectiveness. These actions are discussed below.

Figure 1
IOE multi-year strategy actions, initiatives and objectives
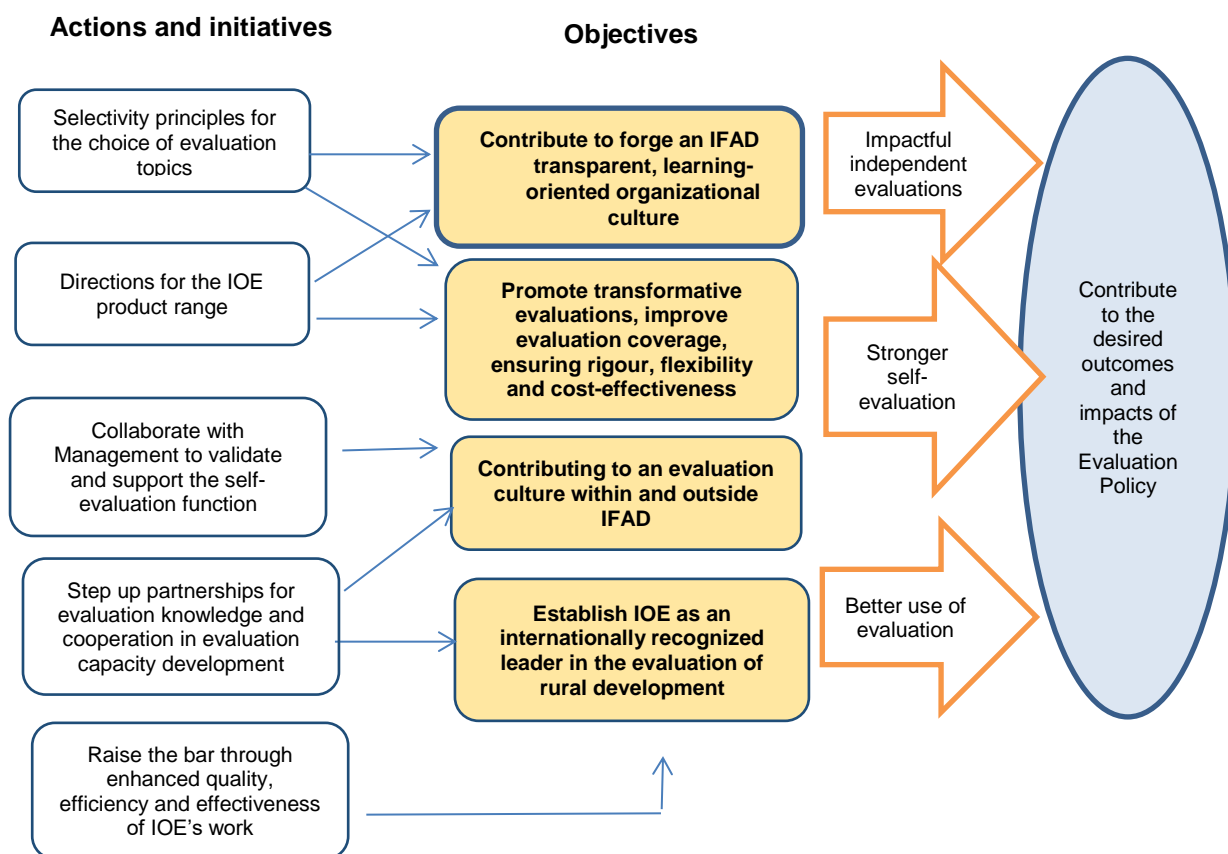
Source: IOE elaboration (2021).

A. Selectivity and principles of prioritization

15. IOE will ensure relevance by applying selectivity principles. Prioritization will take into consideration: (i) requests and guidance from the Evaluation Committee and the Executive Board; (ii) demand from IFAD Management and from other development partners, notably Member States; (iii) knowledge gaps as evidenced by IOE evaluations; and (iv) emerging evidence on smallholder agriculture and rural development from work conducted by IFAD or international think tanks. The prioritization will be influenced by the time frame required to inform future decisions

by Management and IFAD's governing bodies. IOE will pay attention to evaluability and to accumulating evidence in a timely and cost-effective manner.

16. IOE will take into account IFAD's key strategic directions (e.g. IFAD Strategic Framework 2016-2025, and IFAD11, IFAD12 and IFAD13 commitments) and the DEF prepared by Management. IOE will pay special attention to evaluation topics that underpin: (i) improvements to the IFAD business and country programming model, and to the quality and results of IFAD-funded operations; (ii) transformative strategies and interventions; (iii) the preparation of new policies and strategies; and (iv) new areas of work and thematic initiatives by IFAD.

17. IOE will follow the requirements of the 2021 Evaluation Policy, including the need to independently review and validate self-evaluation products and periodically assess and report to the governing bodies on IFAD's self-evaluation function. Ultimately, this is intended to support the quality and reliability of self-evaluation and its comparability with the independent one.

18. Finally, IOE will select evaluation topics that offer opportunities for introducing innovative approaches and for data collection and analysis on pioneering evaluation topics. In line with the 2030 Agenda, attention will be given to inclusiveness, equity and social justice.

19. Considering the above, table 1 presents a tentative set of topics for future evaluations. It will be updated after the midterm review of the strategy.

Table 1
Tentative topics for future evaluations

- The evolving features of the financial architecture of IFAD (e.g. under IFAD11 and IFAD12), and how these contribute to achieving IFAD's mandate and ensuring financial sustainability;

- The progress made in reforming IFAD's model for country programme delivery and its emerging contribution to development results;

- IFAD's contribution to the SDG principle of "leaving no one behind", including targeting and outreach, equity and social justice;

- IFAD self-evaluation function and how this is reflected in the quality assurance processes;

- IFAD's collaboration with private sector entities;

- IFAD and digital agriculture for smallholder farmers;

- A comprehensive evaluation of the results of IFAD11 and IFAD12, including progress made and results achieved with the IFAD11 mainstreaming themes (i.e. environment and climate, gender, nutrition and youth) and the contribution to long-term resilience of smallholder agriculture in developing countries.

20. Once the evaluation topics have been identified, IOE will decide on the most suitable evaluation product, taking into account evaluative evidence needed, the evidence already available, and timeliness and cost-effectiveness considerations. The next section explores IOE's product range.

B. Directions of IOE's product range

21. Sharpening the product range will: (i) improve the coverage of evaluation by allowing the flexibility to select the evaluation products that best fit the topic; and (ii) provide further opportunities for learning and accountability, in line with the recommendations of the 2019 peer review.

22. **A more diversified product range catering for multiple audiences**. This will entail introducing new products (subregional evaluations [SREs], project cluster evaluations [PCEs]), revisiting existing products and piloting real-time evaluations. Table 2 indicates a rebalancing of the products towards higher-plane evaluations. The

changes proposed provide a wider set of options for IOE to select in consultation with the governing bodies and Management. The benchmarking of IOE's current product range with peer organizations is presented in annex II, suggesting that similar evaluation products exist in international practice.

Table 2
Broad direction of different types of evaluations

Type	Direction
Annual Report on Results and Impact of IFAD Operations (ARRI)	To be redirected as an Annual Report of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD, retaining key elements of the ARRI while providing coverage of IOE's evaluation findings and initiatives
Corporate-level/thematic evaluations (CLEs /TEs)	Seek to inform major questions related to Agenda 2030, IFAD12 and, subsequently, IFAD13
Evaluation synthesis (ES)	Continue, with the flexibility to prepare on an as needed basis and to inform IFAD12 and, subsequently, IFAD13
Subregional evaluations	New product
Country strategy and programme evaluations (CSPEs)	Retain, seeking opportunities to broaden coverage
Project cluster evaluations	New product
Impact evaluations	Conduct more selectively
Project performance evaluations	Reduce numbers, enhance selectivity, increase coverage of countries with fewer evaluations
Project completion report validations	Retain, streamline format

23. IOE will continue to conduct **project completion report validations (PCRVs)**, which are desk-based, with full coverage of completion reports. Validating completion reports is common practice in international financial institutions (IFIs) (annex II). PCRVs are important to: (i) validate the project-level self-assessment carried out by Management and raise the quality and credibility of project completion reports; (ii) obtain a sufficient number of project observations to prepare the ARRI; and (iii) provide data and information for other evaluations (e.g. CSPEs, TEs, CLEs, and ESs). A shorter, streamlined format for PCRVs has been introduced. Management could help enhance the visibility and use of PCRVs by including them in their Operational Results Management System.

24. **Project performance evaluations (PPEs)** include country missions with field visits and are key to understanding IFAD's performance at a granular level. They are building blocks for country-level evaluations, ESs, CLEs and the ARRI. IOE expects to reduce the number of PPEs to about five per year (compared to 8 or 10 in the past). Since 2011, IOE has conducted PPEs only for closed projects. In the future, while retaining the same option, IOE could broaden the choice also to projects that are still ongoing but approaching completion or projects that closed a few years earlier. This will provide more flexibility to respond to Management's knowledge needs for new projects or to assess sustainability in the long term. IOE will select PPEs, taking into account the needs of Management, IOE's need to generate evidence ahead of strategic evaluations (e.g. CSPEs and PPEs, CLEs or ESs), and opportunities to broaden coverage of countries where few evaluations were conducted in the past.

25. IOE has introduced **project cluster evaluations (PCEs)**, to be conducted on a small set of projects sharing similar characteristics (e.g. a focus on rural enterprises or rural finance). PCEs can cover both ongoing and closed projects and include field visits. PCEs help generate learning and knowledge feedback loops to inform new and ongoing projects. PCEs will not replace the current stand-alone PPEs and will be conducted sparingly.

26. **Impact evaluations** provide in-depth evidence on project results and proximate factors. IOE will depart from the past practice of conducting an impact evaluation every year to better align them with IFAD needs, and will instead conduct such evaluations when: (i) evidence is required for a more strategic evaluation (e.g. a CLE or ES); and (ii) there are opportunities for methodological innovations. IOE will avoid overlap with impact assessments conducted by Management.

27. IOE has conducted five **country strategy and programme evaluations** annually over the past 10 years. These evaluations feed into subsequent country strategic opportunities programmes and are in increasing demand from IFAD managers and staff. IOE will streamline the format of CSPEs to: (i) give more prominence to strategic and thematic issues; and (ii) reduce the average length of reports. IOE will consider undertaking more CSPEs to broaden its geographic coverage. In consultation with the Executive Board and Management, IOE will prioritize CSPEs in countries that are approaching graduation, according to the relevant IFAD policies.

28. IOE has introduced **subregional evaluations**, covering groups of countries that share common agroecological or socio-economic characteristics (e.g. countries affected by situations of fragility in a given subregion). SREs provide an assessment of IFAD's implementation approaches and organizational set-up (e.g. coordination between country offices) in countries that share salient characteristics. SREs are not a substitute for CSPEs but help cover countries where few or no CSPEs have been conducted. IOE will undertake SREs on a selective basis, in consultation with Management.

29. **Corporate-level and thematic evaluations.** CLEs focus on corporate strategies/policies or organizational processes, while TEs focus on development themes (e.g. rural finance, value chain development). Thus, the methodology (e.g. type of data collection and analysis) will vary depending on the evaluand.

30. **Evaluation syntheses** gather knowledge and lessons from existing IOE evaluations and external sources and thus play an important role in learning. Going forward, three different forms of ES may be considered: (i) a synthesis note, consolidating established findings from evaluations in a concise manner (brief and quick to prepare); (ii) a synthesis evaluation, entailing more extensive analysis, drawing on the desk review and complemented by interviews, focus group discussions and surveys; and (iii) systematic reviews of existing evaluations and studies, following a stricter protocol and adopting meta-analysis techniques. The choice of the ES type will depend on the nature of the topic, the evaluative evidence available and the knowledge demand from IFAD. Tentatively, IOE will prepare one ES per year.

31. To stay abreast of the evolution in IFAD's product mix, IOE will consider **evaluations of non-sovereign operations** (i.e. operations financing non-governmental entities). Given that the related IFAD-funded programme has started very recently, IOE may not need to develop a new product to evaluate individual non-sovereign operations. Instead, it could conduct a PCE or a CLE. IOE will be guided by the existing good practice standards and experience of the ECG-MDB in relation to private sector operations.

32. **Piloting the real-time modality.** Real-time evaluations are not a distinct product type. They are a modality of conducting an evaluation that provides feedback when an intervention is still ongoing and can yield valuable information for corrective measures and help address implementation challenges. Typically, real-time evaluations depend more on qualitative evidence. Since the intervention is ongoing, they do not provide details on outcomes and sustainability. It is expected that the real-time modality will be used for ESs and CLEs.

33. **ARRI**. IOE will continue to produce an annual comprehensive document, but proposes to transition from the ARRI to an "Annual Report of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD". This new document will retain some features of the ARRI, such as summarizing findings from evaluation and presenting an analysis of the time series of ratings and validation of self-evaluation, thus continuing to support the accountability function. It will provide additional coverage of project-level and country-level evaluations, ESs and CLEs and TEs, as well as activities such as evaluation capacity development and IOE's contribution to international debates on evaluation.

C. Strengthen consistency and collaboration between the self-evaluation and independent evaluation functions of IFAD

34. In line with the principles of the 2021 Evaluation Policy, while maintaining its organizational and behavioural independence and avoiding conflicts of interest, IOE will work on having more systematic and in-depth interactions with IFAD Management.

35. For a successful evaluation function, collaboration between self-evaluation and independent evaluation needs to be stepped up. IOE will pay special attention to the following aspects: (i) engaging with Management in the planning of IOE's work programme to better capture evaluation demand and knowledge needs; (ii) consultation with the relevant divisions of IFAD at the time of evaluation design and preparation of approach papers, in order to tailor the evaluation questions to specific needs; (iii) interactions at specific steps of evaluation data collection, analysis and reporting to verify factual information and receive feedback; and (iv) generating opportunities for learning across divisions and departments, for example, by increasing the number of co-hosted learning events.

36. IOE will continue to validate the self-evaluation function and products of IFAD. This will include: (i) conducting PCRVs; (ii) validating country-level self-reviews (when available) as a part of a CSPE process; (iii) analysing and comparing self-ratings and independent ratings in the ARRI, including comments on the Report on IFAD's Development Effectiveness, in line with practice at other IFIs; (iv) reviewing selected impact assessments and the synthesis report on Management's Impact Assessment Initiative; and (v) conducting independent reviews of the self-evaluation system.

37. On a selective basis, IOE will conduct ex post reviews of Management's follow-up to strategic evaluations (e.g. CLEs/TEs). This is additional to IOE's comments on the President's Report on the Implementation Status of Evaluation Recommendations and Management Actions (PRISMA) and will allow better tracking of the actions taken and their outcomes. This initiative will also provide feedback to IOE on the formulation of its recommendations.

38. While self-evaluation is a responsibility of Management, IOE will be available for consultation on methodology, on a selective basis, to support the adoption of international standards. IOE also envisages collaboration with Management on evaluation capacity support to Member States, as discussed in the next section.

D. Stepping up partnerships for evaluation capacity development and for evaluation methodology and practice exchanges

39. **Evaluation capacity development in Member States** is essential for the achievement of broad national development objectives and the SDGs, social inclusiveness and equity. This is also in line with the emphasis of the IFAD Strategic Framework and IFAD12 on national capacity development, i.e. capacity-building for rural policy and programme development, implementation and evaluation. An increasing number of Member States have incorporated the SDGs into their own development strategies and thus need support to track progress.

40. Stronger evaluation capacity in the countries would promote better self-evaluation at the project and country programme level and generate better evidence that can be used for independent evaluations as well.

41. Without compromising its independence, IOE can share its evaluation experience with national agencies in Member States in the area of rural development, also in collaboration with IFAD Management. Such support could include: (i) providing input for country situation analysis of monitoring and evaluation; (ii) assisting in the preparation of national agencies' evaluation policies (e.g. for an evaluation unit in a Ministry of Agriculture) and the compilation of evaluation methodological guidelines to apply international evaluation standards; (iii) organizing ad hoc on-the-job training programmes or internships in IOE for government employees of Member States, when there are no conflicts of interest.

42. IOE will collaborate with existing initiatives on evaluation capacity, including the Global Evaluation Initiative launched by the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), of which IOE is a member.[4] On a selective basis, IOE may also engage in bilateral initiatives, upon the request of Member States' governments, taking into account the strength of the national monitoring and evaluation system concerned and the capacity of the national or regional professional evaluation association that would be acting as partner.

43. **Interactions with other agencies and international networks for methodology, practice exchanges and joint work**. IOE has constructive exchanges with the evaluation offices of the Rome-based agencies (RBAs). In 2020-2021, the three offices conducted a joint evaluation on RBA collaboration. IOE will explore ways to further enhance this collaboration, such as: (i) seeking opportunities for joint work, such as new evaluations or syntheses of evaluative evidence on specific themes;[5] (ii) organizing joint learning events, workshops, webinars and common training events; and (iii) cooperating in communities of practice such as EvalForward (an initiative that the three RBA evaluation offices and the evaluation unit of CGIAR have supported since 2018). Within the United Nations agencies, IOE will seek cooperation opportunities with the evaluation offices of the Global Environment Facility, United Nations Environment Programme and the UNDP, notably on the topic of climate resilience.

44. IOE will seek to raise its profile and contributions to international networks on rural development evaluation, and continue contributing to the ECG-MDB and the United Nations Evaluation Group. It will also engage in initiatives with the International Development Evaluation Association, the African Evaluation Association, the American Evaluation Association, and the European Evaluation Society. In particular, IOE will: (i) present the findings of selected major evaluations; and (ii) exchange information on emerging methodological features and evaluation practices and contribute to upgrading evaluation standards.

45. IOE will explore **opportunities to collaborate with universities and think tanks**, based on their area of expertise, on evaluation methodology enhancement and use of information technology for evaluation (e.g. geographic information system, text and data mining, using artificial intelligence).

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[4] Led by the Independent Evaluation Group of the World Bank, in collaboration with the Independent Evaluation Office of the UNDP and currently supported by bilateral and multilateral development agencies.

[5] In 2020, the evaluation offices of Food and Agriculture Organization, IFAD, World Food Programme and United Nations Industrial Development Organization jointly produced a rapid Evidence Summary on COVID-19 and Food Security.

E. Raising the bar: enhancing quality, effectiveness and efficiency

46. IOE will take a number of measures to consolidate and enhance the quality and use of its evaluations, including:

- Update the **Evaluation Manual**, in collaboration with Management, to upgrade methods and standards, draw on progress being made by the international evaluation community and make reports more cogent and concise. The manual will provide an opportunity to promote the 2030 Agenda as it pertains to social inclusiveness, justice and equity.

- Further invest in the use of **information and communications technology for evaluation**. IOE has introduced the use of remote-sensing and geographic information systems in selected evaluations and this can be further expanded. IOE could explore opportunities to adopt machine learning and artificial intelligence to conduct text analytics, sort projects by taxonomy, classify evaluation notes and compile lessons learned in a systematic way so that they are easily searchable and enhance knowledge management. In this context IOE will collaborate with peer organizations such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the UNDP.

- IOE has established an **Evaluation Advisory Panel** for quality assurance, comprising senior international evaluation experts.[6] The panel supports the Director of IOE on: (i) quality standards for development evaluation; (ii) methodology innovation in evaluation; (iii) global trends in international and rural development; and (iv) enhancing the usefulness and use of evaluations. The panel members will report on their overall findings and recommendations in an annual meeting to be attended by members of the Executive Board and Evaluation Committee, IFAD senior managers and IOE staff.

47. IOE will bolster the effectiveness of the independent evaluation function by enhancing the usefulness of evaluations and promote their **utilization** by all stakeholders. In particular, IOE will:

- Sharpen its evaluation recommendations, notably for strategic evaluations, ensuring that recommendations are focused and limited in number.

- Undertake a more systematic and focused ex post review of the implementation of recommendations of selected strategic evaluations.

- Support Management in introducing an electronic platform for the PRISMA to track recommendation follow-up, as recommended by IOE in its 2020 comments on the PRISMA.

- Strengthen its engagement with external partners, including governments and national evaluation associations.

48. IOE will intensify its efforts to **communicate evaluation findings and disseminate lessons learned** across a wide range of stakeholders, including Member States. IOE is reviewing its communications products and approaches with a view to introducing new products that better engage the audience on evaluation findings and to phasing

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[6] Composition of the Evaluation Advisory Panel: (i) Donna Mertens, Gallaudet University (international specialist in evaluation for social justice, mixed methods for evaluation); (ii) Rob van den Berg, former Director, Independent Evaluation Office of the Global Environment Facility, former President of the International Development Evaluation Association; (iii) Gonzalo Hernández Licona, former Executive Secretary, National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy in Mexico; (iv) Bagele Chilisa, University of Botswana (international specialist in culturally responsive, indigenous evaluation); (v) Hans Lundgren, former Director, OECD-DAC Network on Development Evaluation.
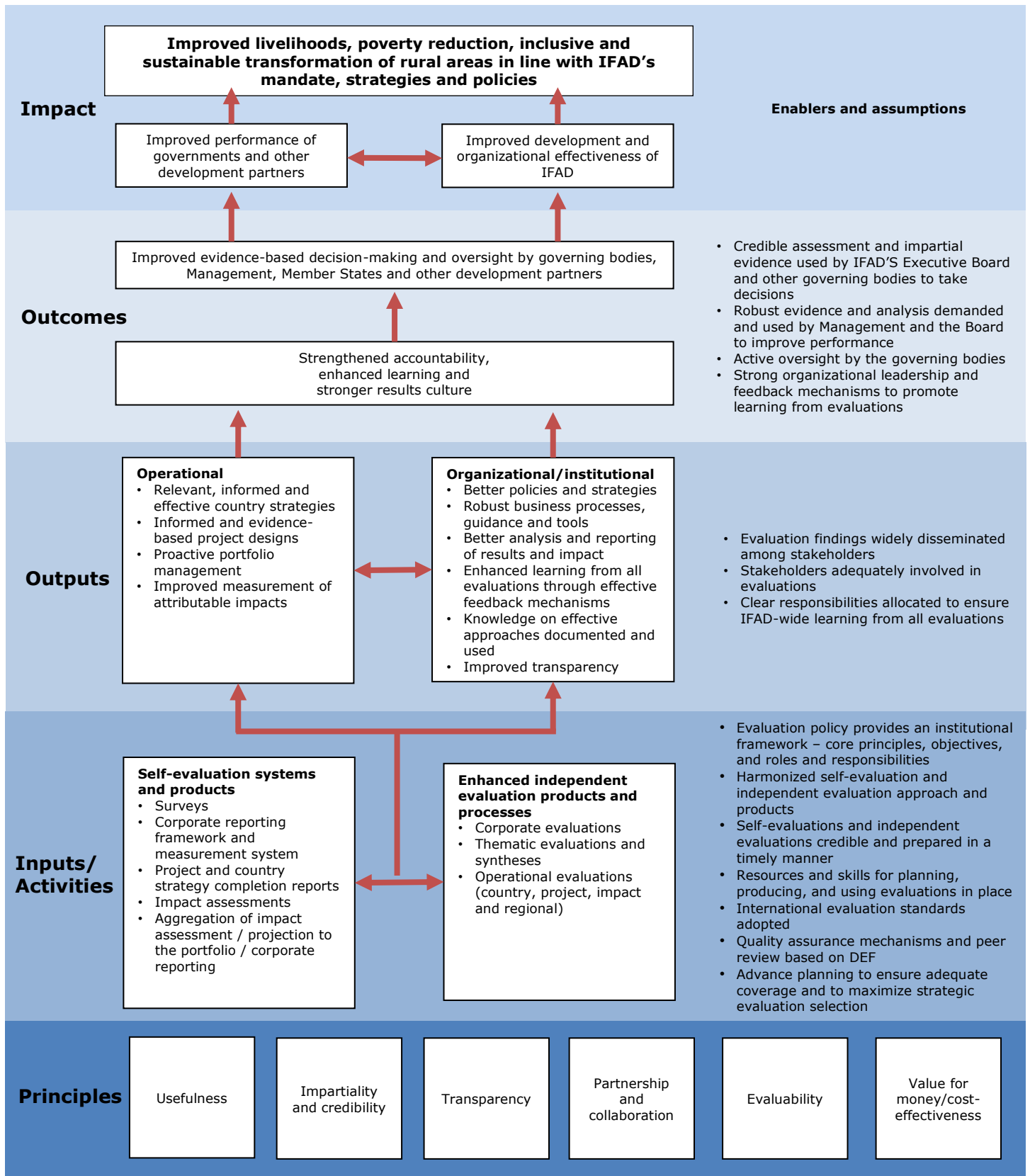
out those of less interest. IOE will continue to be active on social media and will work on joint dissemination, in collaboration with evaluation offices of RBAs.

49. IOE is also revamping its website to provide easier access to its reports and products, notably in terms of geographic and theme tracking, and to increase engagement of its audience within IFAD and outside.

50. **Enhancing process efficiency**. IOE will streamline internal processes to reduce administrative steps, improve timeliness and rationalize the use of human and financial resources, also drawing on lessons learned from conducting evaluations under the restrictions around COVID-19. The streamlined processes will be detailed in the revised Evaluation Manual and in internal guidelines.

51. IOE will monitor and report on its performance using core indicators for coverage, adoption and use of recommendations, engagement and utilization of resources (annex IV).

52. **Meeting future challenges and resource implications**. In order to meet future challenges and implement the multi-year strategy effectively, IOE will work on several concomitant measures. Internally, it will identify skills needs within its own team. These will include skills for specific evaluation topics (e.g. evaluation of private sector interventions) as well as IT skills. IOE will cater to these needs through: (i) staff training; (ii) collaboration with international experts on a retainer basis; (iii) opportunities for staff exchange with other organizations; and (iv) targeted hiring of staff.

53. IOE will also review its internal organization, in particular the configuration of its product-oriented working teams, so as to maximize opportunities for synergies and internal exchanges and avoid creating unnecessary administrative layers.

54. In order to achieve the objectives of this strategy, an upward revision in the human and financial resources of IOE may be required. IOE will take a gradual approach and, noting that an annual work programme and budget will continue to be a requirement under IFAD rules, will discuss the size of the work programme and human and financial resource issues with the governing bodies of IFAD as a part of its annual work programme and budget submission.[7]

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[7] Between 2010 and 2021, IOE's administrative budget decreased from US$6.2 million to US$5.81 million in nominal terms. Per Executive Board decision, the ratio of IOE budget to the IFAD programme of loans and grants was capped to 0.9 per cent in 2018 and the average ratio in the past six years has been 0.52 per cent, never exceeding 0.62 per cent in a single year.

Theory of change of the 2021 Evaluation Policy

Impact

Improved livelihoods, poverty reduction, inclusive and sustainable transformation of rural areas in line with IFAD's mandate, strategies and policies

Improved performance of governments and other development partners

Improved development and organizational effectiveness of IFAD

Enablers and assumptions

Outcomes

Improved evidence-based decision-making and oversight by governing bodies, Management, Member States and other development partners

Strengthened accountability, enhanced learning and stronger results culture

- Credible assessment and impartial evidence used by IFAD'S Executive Board and other governing bodies to take decisions
- Robust evidence and analysis demanded and used by Management and the Board to improve performance
- Active oversight by the governing bodies
- Strong organizational leadership and feedback mechanisms to promote learning from evaluations

Outputs

Operational
- Relevant, informed and effective country strategies
- Informed and evidence-based project designs
- Proactive portfolio management
- Improved measurement of attributable impacts

Organizational/institutional
- Better policies and strategies
- Robust business processes, guidance and tools
- Better analysis and reporting of results and impact
- Enhanced learning from all evaluations through effective feedback mechanisms
- Knowledge on effective approaches documented and used
- Improved transparency

- Evaluation findings widely disseminated among stakeholders
- Stakeholders adequately involved in evaluations
- Clear responsibilities allocated to ensure IFAD-wide learning from all evaluations

Inputs/ Activities

Self-evaluation systems and products
- Surveys
- Corporate reporting framework and measurement system
- Project and country strategy completion reports
- Impact assessments
- Aggregation of impact assessment / projection to the portfolio / corporate reporting

Enhanced independent evaluation products and processes
- Corporate evaluations
- Thematic evaluations and syntheses
- Operational evaluations (country, project, impact and regional)

- Evaluation policy provides an institutional framework – core principles, objectives, and roles and responsibilities
- Harmonized self-evaluation and independent evaluation approach and products
- Self-evaluations and independent evaluations credible and prepared in a timely manner
- Resources and skills for planning, producing, and using evaluations in place
- International evaluation standards adopted
- Quality assurance mechanisms and peer review based on DEF
- Advance planning to ensure adequate coverage and to maximize strategic evaluation selection

Principles

| Usefulness | Impartiality and credibility | Transparency | Partnership and collaboration | Evaluability | Value for money/cost-effectiveness |

Evaluation product range, benchmarking with peers

Table 1
Evaluation product mix – Benchmarking with peers

Type of evaluation	IFAD	WBG/IEG[a]	ADB/IED[b]	AfDB/IDEV[c]	IDB/OVE[d]
Validation					
Project	100%	100% under review	100% public sector 100% private sector Technical assistance completion validation	100% public sector 50% private sector 10% with field visits	100% public sector 100% private sector
Evaluation					
Project	✓	✓ To be conducted more selectively to optimize learning opportunities	✓	✓	✓
Technical assistance		✓ So far evaluated as a part of lending operations	✓		
Country/ regional programme	✓	✓ Country programme evaluations conducted Regional evaluations piloted	✓	Country and regional strategy evaluations. Midterm evaluations introduced on a pilot basis	✓
Cluster	New	Cluster programme evaluation Piloted	✓	Project cluster evaluations are designed and timed to contribute to broader thematic or sector evaluations	
Thematic/ sector		✓	✓	✓	✓
Corporate	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Synthesis/ systematic reviews	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Impact	✓/		✓	✓	
Other[8]	ARRI	Report on the Results and Performance of the WBG (RAP report) Under review	Annual evaluation reviews	Annual synthesis report on validation of project completion reports. Annual report for IDEV	Annual report of validations

[a] World Bank Group/Independent Evaluation Group
[b] Asian Development Bank/Independent Evaluation Department
[c] African Development Bank/Independent Development Evaluation
[d] Inter-American Development Bank/Office of Evaluation and Oversight

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[8] Using only the ratings provided by the independent evaluation office for the criteria-based ratings of operations, not the self-assessed ratings.

Evaluation audience

Evaluation type	Audience	Key stakeholders
Project completion report validations	IOE and the relevant regional division of the Programme Management Department (PMD)	Not applicable.
Project performance evaluations	PMD, country and project managers, government officials.	Regional director, country director, country office (if existing), senior government counterpart, communities and grass-roots organizations.
Impact evaluations	IFAD Management, PMD, country and project managers, government officials. In addition, impact evaluations also benefit governments and policymakers, the development community, and to some extent, academia.	Regional director, country director, country office (if existing), senior government counterpart, communities and grass-roots organizations.
Project cluster evaluation	IFAD Management, PMD, country and project managers, government officials. Evaluation Committee/Executive Board. External audience: academia, other IFIs, United Nations agencies.	Regional director, country director, country office (if it exists), senior government counterpart, former project director. Others as relevant.
Country strategy and programme evaluation	Evaluation Committee/Executive Board. IFAD Management, PMD, governments and related institutions, other donors that contributed to financing the country programme and other national partners, including beneficiaries' organizations.	IFAD divisional director, regional division, country director, project manager, government counterpart directorates, and representative(s) of cofinancing organization(s), civil society organizations, communities and grass-roots organizations.
Subregional evaluations	Evaluation Committee/Executive Board. IFAD Management, PMD, governments and related institutions, other donors that contributed to financing the country programme and other national partners, including beneficiaries' organizations.	IFAD divisional director, country directors, regional economist and portfolio adviser, project managers, government counterpart directorates, and representative(s) of cofinancing organization(s), civil society organizations.
Evaluation synthesis report	Evaluation Committee/Executive Board, IFAD Management and staff, and global audience, depending on the topic.	As a minimum, Strategy and Knowledge Department (SKD), PMD.
Corporate-level evaluation	Evaluation Committee/Executive Board and Senior Management as well as operations managers at all levels in PMD and SKD.	IFAD Senior Management, selected division directors.
ARRI and successor	Evaluation Committee/Executive Board, IFAD Management and staff. General public.	IFAD operational staff and Senior Management will be consulted during the report preparation.

Key performance indicators matrix

Key performance indicator	Baseline	Target	Notes
Adoption of evaluation recommendations			
1. Percentage of recommendations partially or fully agreed	99% (year 2020 PRISMA)	95%	Available via PRISMA
2. Percentage of agreed recommendations on high-plane evaluations implemented satisfactorily and in a timely manner	n.a.	90%	Based on biannual verification by IOE on higher-plane evaluation
Coverage of IFAD programmes			
3. Number of higher-level evaluation reports (CLE, ES, CSPE, SRE) published in the year	6	7-8	Computed on an annual basis
4. Proportion of active countries covered through subregional, country-level evaluations, project performance and impact evaluations, PCEs on a two-year basis	25% (years 2019-2020)	28-33%	Computed on a biannual basis
Engagement, outreach and feedback received			
5. Feedback received from the Executive Board and subsidiary bodies	n.a.	Tracked	To be reported on in qualitative terms
6. Feedback received from the Evaluation Advisory Panel on evaluation quality	n.a.	Tracked	To be reported on in qualitative terms
7. Engagement events with IFAD Management and governments and feedback received	n.a.	Tracked	To be reported on in quantitative and qualitative terms
8. Number of visits to IOE website	77,380 (year 2019)	80,000	Data available via IFAD Communications Division
9. Number of learning events (co-)organized by IOE	8 (year 2019)	9-10	Includes internal events and those open to the public
10. Score of IOE from the UN-SWAP (gender) annual review[9]	Score of 10.4/12 (year 2020)	Score equal or above 9.0/12 (which is the threshold for 'exceeding requirements')	
Utilization of resources and cost-effectiveness			
11. Percentage of non-staff budget utilized	98.7%	95-100%	
12. Ratio of IOE budget to programme of loans and grants	0.62% (year 2020)	≤0.9%	The 0.9% cap was decided by the Executive Board in 2008 and in 2020 it decided that it would be calculated on a three-year replenishment basis
13. Ratio of IOE budget to IFAD-administered budget	3.64%	Tracked	

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[9] The United Nations System-Wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women is a United Nations system-wide accountability framework designed to measure, monitor and drive progress towards a common set of standards to which to aspire and adhere for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women. It applies to all entities, departments and offices of the United Nations system.