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2023 President's Report on the Implementation Status of Evaluation Recommendations and Management Actions (PRISMA)

Comments by the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD

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Action: The Evaluation Committee is invited to review the comments of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD on the 2023 President's Report on the Implementation Status of Evaluation Recommendations and Management Actions (PRISMA).

Technical questions:

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2023 President's Report on the Implementation Status of Evaluation Recommendations and Management Actions (PRISMA)

Comments by the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD

1. In accordance with the Revised IFAD Evaluation Policy,[1] the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) provides comments on the President's Report on the Implementation Status of Evaluation Recommendations and Management Actions (PRISMA) for consideration by the Evaluation Committee and the Executive Board.

2. Evaluation recommendations aim to strengthen IFAD's ability to achieve development results in an effective, efficient and sustainable manner. Implementing evaluation recommendations is an important milestone in IFAD's use of evaluations to fulfil its accountability for achieving development results. IOE welcomes the PRISMA as an important instrument within IFAD's evaluation architecture for promoting accountability. It analyses the status of implementation of evaluation recommendations and organizational learning by identifying recurring findings emerging from these evaluations.

3. **Follow-up to earlier IOE comments on PRISMA**: **Online PRISMA.** In response to the 2020 Report on IFAD's Development Effectiveness (RIDE), IOE recommended transforming PRISMA into a real-time online database accessible to all. Management agreed to that recommendation, recognizing that it would enrich the learning and accountability actions reported in the PRISMA and promote more broad-based use of evaluations. Such an online system to track Management responses to all evaluation recommendations will render IFAD's performance in responding to evaluations more transparent, promote learning, and align IFAD with the practices of other international financial institutions and most United Nations agencies with a portfolio size similar to IFAD's.

4. It is reassuring to note that work has begun on the online PRISMA, and that it could become operational in 2024. For IFAD to fully benefit from the online PRISMA, it will be necessary to ensure that potential users receive adequate training and support.

5. **Coverage of the 2023 PRISMA.**[2] The 2023 PRISMA presents the implementation status of 59 recommendations stemming from 12 evaluations (see table 1). These include: (i) the recommendations from all 9 new IOE evaluations completed during the period 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022; and (ii) the recommendations from three earlier IOE evaluations whose implementation status has not been reviewed recently, namely the country strategy and programme evaluations (CSPEs) for Madagascar and Sudan (completed in 2020) and Ecuador (completed in 2021). The 2023 PRISMA also includes follow-up on IOE's comments on the 2022 RIDE.

[1] Document EB 2021/132/R.5/Rev.1.
[2] Each year, the PRISMA covers selected evaluations completed recently; for instance, the 2023 PRISMA covers evaluations from the period 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022 and selected earlier evaluations to track follow-up.

Table 1
Evaluation coverage of the 2023 PRISMA

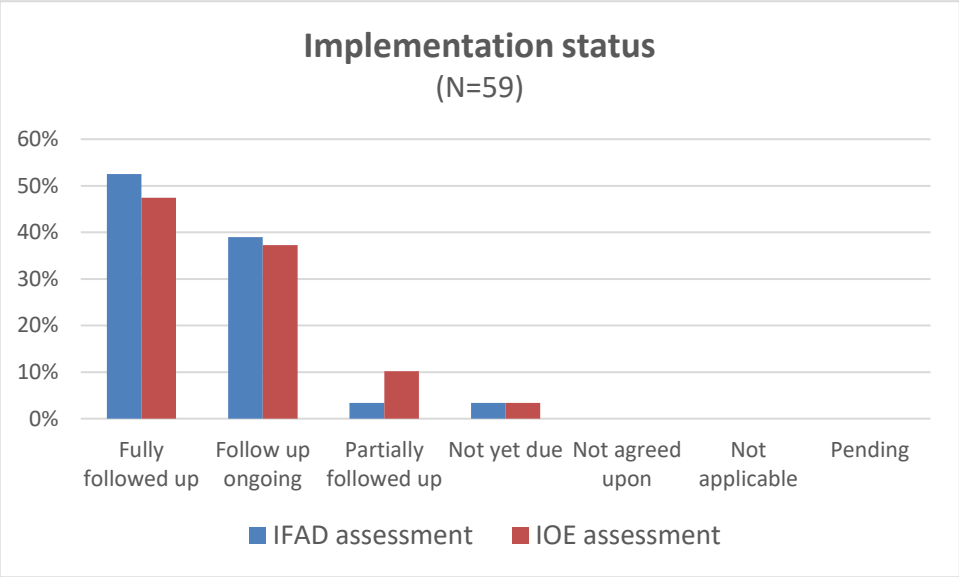
	Evaluation	*Year of completion*	*Number of recommendations for which follow-up was reported in PRISMA 2023*
1	CSPE Burundi	April 2022	6
2	CSPE Ecuador *	Mar 2021	4
3	CSPE Madagascar *	Dec 2020	8
4	CSPE Morocco	Jan 2022	6
5	CSPE Niger	Dec 2021	6
6	CSPE Pakistan	Mar 2022	5
7	CSPE Sudan *	Dec 2020	2
8	CSPE Uganda	July 2021	5
9	PPE Indonesia	Feb 2022	4
10	PPE Senegal	Sept 2021	5
11	PPE Uzbekistan	May 2022	3
12	IE Ethiopia – Community-based Integrated Natural Resources Management Project	Sept 2021	5
	Total recommendations		**59**

* Historical follow-up – CSPE (recommendations included in the analysis). Not all recommendations in the CSPE are followed up in this PRISMA.
Source: 2022 PRISMA, Volume II.
PPE = project performance evaluation, IE = impact evaluation.

6. **High level of Management uptake**. IFAD Management agreed with all 59 evaluation recommendations considered by PRISMA (100 per cent). This high rate of uptake of IOE recommendations reflects Management's commitment to learn and correct course based on evaluative evidence. The increased uptake may also reflect IOE's strengthened evaluation processes to engage with Management.

7. **Follow-up to recommendations: Self-assessment and IOE verification.** As required by the evaluation policy, IOE validates IFAD's self-assessment of the status of the follow-up to the recommendations presented in the PRISMA. This is a critical part of IOE's comments, as it relates to IFAD's action on recommendations. Figure 1 summarizes the validation of 2023 PRISMA.

Figure 1
IOE validation of the status of implementation of recommendations (2023 PRISMA)



Source: IOE analysis and the 2023 PRISMA, Volume II.

- IFAD deemed 31 of the 59 recommendations as being fully followed up (53 per cent), 24 as ongoing (41 per cent), 2 as partially implemented (3 per cent), and 2 as not yet due (3 per cent).
- IOE review found that 28 of the 59 recommendations were fully followed up (47 per cent), 23 were ongoing (39 per cent), 6 were partially implemented (10 per cent), and 2 were not yet due (3 per cent).
- In assessing IFAD's actions, IOE found that 4 of the 59 responses (7 per cent) did not fully address the issues flagged by the evaluation recommendations and downgraded their status to partially implemented.

8. To contextualize the current assessment further, table 2 presents a comparison with recent PRISMAs (2020, 2021 and 2022) and provides key statistics.

Table 2
Comparison of recent PRISMAs 2020–2023

		2020 PRISMA	*2021 PRISMA*	*2022 PRISMA*	*2023 PRISMA*
1	Number of evaluations considered	16	12	13	12
2	Number of recommendations considered	67	48	69	59
3	Percentage of recommendations accepted	97	100	94	100
4	IFAD estimate of share of recommendations fully implemented (percentage)	60	65	67	53
5	IOE determination of share of recommendations fully implemented (percentage)	50	58	64	47
6	Percentage of recommendations not fully addressing the issues raised by the evaluation (IOE determination)	21	14.5	3	7

Source: Executive Board documents related to PRISMA reports and IOE comments on those reports.

9. **In summary,** table 2 shows the following:

   (i) The percentage of recommendations that are deemed fully implemented by IOE increased during 2020, 2021 and 2022 (from 50 per cent to 64 per cent) and dropped in 2023 to 47 per cent. As such, closer attention and follow-up are required from Management.

   (ii) The percentage of Management actions that were not fully aligned with the underlying messages of the recommendations in 2023 increased slightly compared to 2022 (from 3 to 7 per cent); however, the percentage is lower than in 2020 and 2021.

10. **In the 2023 PRISMA, less than half the recommendations analysed were fully followed up, the lowest reported in the past four years.** IFAD would benefit from prioritizing timelier follow-up of recommendations. In its multi-year strategy, IOE envisages conducting systematic reviews of the online PRISMA to assess the quality and timeliness of Management response updates.

I. Ongoing follow-up action that may require further review

11. IOE recognizes that the share of Management responses that do not address the issues raised by the recommendations (7 per cent) is lower than in 2020 and 2021 (table 2); nonetheless, the situation persists. In this context, IOE offers the following comments to strengthen the alignment between Management actions and the changes that are sought by evaluation recommendations.

A. Responses that do not fully address the issues raised by recommendations

12. In the case of four recommendations, IOE identified IFAD responses that did not address the changes sought by the evaluation. These are described below.

13. Recommendation 4 of CSPE Ecuador called for IFAD to step up its technical and administrative support to the country programme. Management actions show no evidence of enhanced technical support (there is cursory mention of some additional administrative support). Hence, the fully implemented status is downgraded to partially implemented.

14. Recommendation 1 of CSPE Niger called for refining of the programme's geographical targeting and for the national unit providing representation and technical assistance to dedicate more attention to analysing the result of the development approaches adopted by the projects. Management's response does not address these main strategic issues.

15. Recommendation 3 of CSPE Uganda called for strengthened youth expertise in the project management unit to facilitate IFAD in delivering more transformative approaches based on the specific needs of youth (young men and young women). Management actions mention bolstered project management unit expertise, but it focused on thematic interventions and operational functions – not on gender or youth. Hence, IOE downgraded the fully implemented status to partially implemented.

16. Recommendation 5 of the Senegal project performance evaluation called for a thorough analysis of the implications when far-reaching changes to a project design are pursued during implementation. Management's response states that the decision to make such changes was reached by IFAD and the Government and does not address the concerns raised by the recommendation. Hence, the status of implementation is downgraded from fully implemented to partially implemented.

17. Given this analysis, it would be beneficial to introduce a "not implemented" category to capture cases of this nature.

B. Conclusion

18. This PRISMA continues to make a commendable effort to learn from evaluation recommendations. Far more robust and enriching lessons could be learned when the online PRISMA allows IFAD to analyse the full universe of available evaluations and their recommendations, rather than the 12 evaluations that are presently analysed each year. IOE thanks Management for this opportunity to provide feedback.