
Minutes of the 125th session of the Evaluation Committee

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Minutes of the 125th session of the Evaluation Committee

1. The deliberations of the Evaluation Committee at its 125th session – held both in presence and virtually on 19 June 2024 – are reflected in the present minutes.
2. The minutes, as approved by the Committee, will be shared with the Executive Board for information.

Agenda item 1: Opening of the session

3. The Secretary of IFAD opened the session by welcoming the attendees and congratulating members on their appointment to the Evaluation Committee.
4. The session was attended by Committee members from Egypt, Finland, France, India, Indonesia, Kingdom of the Netherlands, Nigeria, Mexico and Switzerland. Observers were present from Canada, China and Peru. Moreover, the session was attended by the Director, Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE); the Deputy Director, IOE; the Associate Vice-President, Programme Management Department; the Associate Vice-President, Strategy and Knowledge Department; the Director, Operational Policy and Results Division; the Director, Environment, Climate, Gender and Social Inclusion Division; the Regional Director, Near East, North Africa and Europe Division; the Secretary of IFAD; and other IFAD staff.
5. Mr Ayhan Baran, Alternate Permanent Representative of the Republic of Türkiye to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Agencies in Rome, participated in the Committee's deliberations on the country strategy and programme evaluation (CSPE) for the Republic of Türkiye. The representative's presence ensured that the deliberations benefited from the Government's perspective on the evaluation.

Agenda item 2: Election of the Chairperson of the Evaluation Committee (EC 2024/125/W.P.2)

6. The Secretary recalled that in accordance with rule 1.3 of the Evaluation Committee's Revised Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure, as approved by the Executive Board in April 2021, the Committee elected its Chairperson from Lists B and C Committee members. The rotation of the chair is the prerogative of Lists B and C. There was consensus on the nomination of Dr Yaya Olaniran of Nigeria, who was thus elected as Chairperson of the Evaluation Committee to serve until the conclusion of the term of office of the current Committee composition. Due to unforeseen circumstances preventing Dr Olaniran from being present in Rome, Ms Erma Rheindrayani of Indonesia was appointed to chair the 125th session.
7. The Committee, IOE and Management congratulated Dr Olaniran on his election and expressed their heartfelt gratitude to the outgoing Chair, Ambassador Miguel García Winder of Mexico, praising his effective leadership, ability to offer new perspectives during challenging debates and highlighting his role in fostering thoughtful and innovative discussions.

Agenda item 3: Adoption of the agenda (EC 2024/125/W.P.1)

8. The Committee adopted the agenda as contained in document EC 2024/125/W.P.1.

Agenda item 4: Country strategy and programme evaluation for the Republic of Türkiye (EC 2024/125/W.P.3)

Key messages:

- Management agreed to the request from members to publish the 2023 guidelines for country strategic opportunities programmes (COSOPs) on the IFAD website.
- IOE and Management were called upon to discuss whether there was a need to revise the evaluation manual to include the specific case of CSPEs for countries eligible for graduation.
- Future COSOPs should take into account the Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS).
- The Committee welcomed IFAD's timely response to the effects of the earthquakes in February 2023 and its continued engagement in affected areas.
- The agreement at completion point would be shared with Committee members as soon as signed.

9. The Evaluation Committee welcomed the CSPE for the Republic of Türkiye, the second such evaluation conducted in the country, covering the period from 2016 to 2022, as contained in document EC 2024/125/W.P.3. The agreement at completion point had not yet been signed and would be shared at a later stage. Committee members expressed gratitude to both IOE and Management for the comprehensive report and responses provided.
10. Members took note of the statement delivered on behalf of the Government by Mr Ayhan Baran, Alternate Permanent Representative of the Republic of Türkiye to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Agencies in Rome. They acknowledged the longstanding and productive cooperation between IFAD and Türkiye, highlighting that Türkiye was now a major agricultural power.
11. As a country that was potentially eligible for graduation subject to negotiation with the Government, members would have appreciated had the CSPE addressed the graduation process with relevant recommendations, given the implications for IFAD's future engagement in the country. IOE would consider how to incorporate relevant observations into future evaluations and consult with Management to determine whether any modifications to the evaluation manual were required to cover the specific issue of CSPEs in graduation-eligible countries. Management would also ensure that the COSOP guidelines, duly updated following the Board's approval of the graduation policy, were posted on the IFAD website.¹
12. Members welcomed IFAD's positive contribution to Türkiye's development with its focus on rural areas and the most vulnerable farming communities. A number of areas for improvement were identified, including knowledge management, engagement in policy dialogue and leveraging of partnerships, all of which were key to ensuring the sustainability of benefits and scaling up in the specific contexts of upper-middle-income countries.
13. Management noted that the recalibration exercise aimed to strengthen knowledge management by adopting a coordinated approach to capturing undocumented knowledge, formalizing this documentation and disseminating it to ensure its

¹ The guidelines for the development of such COSOPs, which are subject to case-by-case negotiations with governments, when the gross national income per capita of a country remains above the Graduation Discussion Income for three consecutive years prior to the start of an IFAD financing cycle, have been posted on the IFAD website at the following link: [Operational Procedures and Guidelines for Country Strategies \(ifad.org\)](https://www.ifad.org/en/operational-procedures-and-guidelines-for-country-strategies).

effective use. IFAD had been requested by the Government to set up a sustainable innovation and cooperation platform to collect evidence-based data and knowledge to promote cooperation on innovations.

14. Management observed that, as was the case with knowledge management, policy dialogue was more prevalent than formally recognized. Efforts were under way to document such endeavours, including by identifying policy engagement issues and priorities up front in both COSOPs and projects to facilitate monitoring of progress. IFAD exerted influence at the local level, as seen in the increased demand for services in the provinces. IFAD's programmatic approach and alignment with government priorities provided opportunities to support and bring evidence to discussions when designing future programmes.
15. On partnerships, Management noted how Türkiye had clear development strategies and steered different donors to specific sectors. IFAD's niche remained in upland and mountain areas, especially in Eastern Anatolia, where poverty was most severe. Management confirmed that strong implementation partnerships existed with national bodies and with special provincial administrations, which were crucial for localized interventions and scaling efforts. In terms of visibility, IFAD enjoyed a strong partnership with the General Directorate of Forestry for the scaling up of the Murat River Watershed Rehabilitation Project. As such, IFAD was recognized as a partner of choice and a respected contributor to policy dialogue when considering activities in certain areas such as the highlands.
16. In response to questions regarding the effectiveness and focus of the targeting strategy, Management explained that the self-targeting approach was complemented by other methods (e.g. direct targeting) to ensure inclusive and sustainable transformation in rural areas. It was important to reach out to both the poorest and the economically active members of the community as the latter were in a position to stimulate job creation and employment opportunities, in particular for women and youth, the groups targeted most in the context of Türkiye and other middle-income economies.
17. Members highlighted the importance of involving men in gender equality processes and emphasized the need for future COSOPs to incorporate the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment. Management remarked that efforts on gender issues, particularly in rural regions with a patriarchal structure, were ongoing to ensure that women and youth had access to services and opportunities through participatory approaches and tailored projects. As regards data collection, recent projects had captured gender and youth data, however data on persons with disabilities were still lacking.
18. In response to queries as to the location of the IFAD subregional office, Management noted that while Ankara was closer to the IFAD programme, Istanbul was the preferred option due to its superior regional connectivity – including by rail and air with Ankara – which would prove more cost-effective.
19. Members expressed appreciation for IFAD's quick response to the February 2023 earthquakes in Türkiye and asked about IFAD's future role in reconstruction efforts in the earthquake-affected regions. Management informed the Committee that funds under the existing Uplands Rural Development Programme had been repurposed to support affected regions. Moreover, future IFAD interventions would focus on these regions, addressing the severe impacts on livelihoods, livestock and infrastructure, as well as on water-related activities due to climate change-induced water stress. Project design guidelines had been updated to respond to situations vulnerable to natural disasters by including a crisis and disaster risk reduction component. This allowed for a rapid response to natural disasters by quickly reallocating money in the system in agreement with the Government rather than having first to restructure a project and then reallocate funds.

Agenda item 5: Corporate-level evaluation on IFAD's knowledge management practices (EC 2024/125/W.P.4 + Add. 1)

Key messages:

- Members saw the recalibration exercise and the establishment of the new Office of Development Effectiveness as an opportunity to enhance the corporate knowledge management function.
- Management was encouraged to create a better understanding of and insight into IFAD's external partnerships, both general and those specific to knowledge management.
- Dedicated human and financial resources for ensuring effective knowledge management at IFAD should be allocated and measured.

20. The Evaluation Committee welcomed the corporate-level evaluation (CLE) on IFAD's knowledge management (KM) practices, encompassing the period from 2016 to mid-2023, as contained in document EC 2024/125/W.P.4, as well as Management's response, as contained in the addendum. Committee members also took note that the document would be submitted to the Executive Board in September.
21. Given the potential for IFAD to deliver transformative knowledge management practices at country level, it was unfortunate that the evaluation had not been available for reference during the Consultation on the Thirteenth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources (IFAD13) process as originally planned.
22. Members noted that decentralization efforts had significantly impacted knowledge management at IFAD, and commended IFAD's efforts to decentralize KM despite the challenges posed by heavy workloads, understaffed country offices, limited dedicated resources and staff turnover. Members also recognized that the ongoing organizational recalibration process had affected the KM set-up and operations, and that time was needed for it to be fully settled and institutionalized. That said, the recalibration exercise and the establishment of the new Office of Development Effectiveness represented an opportunity to enhance the corporate knowledge management function. The exact purpose and structure of the new office was still under consideration, therefore Management could not yet advise on how the findings and recommendations of the CLE would be implemented.
23. Members emphasized the importance of knowledge partnerships and were pleased with IFAD's steps to increase external partnerships, although they urged for better systematic monitoring and follow-up on KM cooperation and the leveraging of lessons learned from major knowledge partners. IFAD needed to maximize its partnerships with other organizations, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and World Bank (and relevant knowledge networks), to benefit from existing knowledge. Such leveraging of partnerships would also serve to address the limitations of IFAD's relatively small scale and the thin spread of its knowledge resources, and to extend its reach in countries with limited or no IFAD presence. One member commented that centralized knowledge generation appeared to be overemphasized in IFAD.
24. Management provided some successful examples of partnerships focused on knowledge management, including collaboration with the World Bank, FAO and the World Food Programme (WFP), and specific initiatives such as the agricultural research for development partnership with the European Commission and CGIAR Centers, which integrate research and innovation into IFAD's operational designs. Another notable example provided by Management was the country advisory services partnership with FAO, the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, which focused on integrating external knowledge into IFAD's operations.

25. There was broad consensus that while knowledge management should be properly resourced, resource limitations could not be the source of all inefficiencies. Strategic decision-making and prioritization were essential, as resources would always be limited. Implementation of some recommendations would require budget allocations, such as setting up budgetary systems and appointing knowledge managers. Nevertheless, Management expressed support for numerous cost-neutral initiatives to enhance KM and implement actionable recommendations, such as applying international standards and making knowledge management a central part of IFAD's reform agenda. Roles and responsibilities in knowledge management should be clarified across the organization and fragmented approaches to KM should be addressed through proper planning and staff-wide orientation.
26. Members noted the absence of references to technology and artificial intelligence (AI) in the Management response. Management noted that AI's role in curating information and learning from IFAD's portfolio had significantly grown in 2024. Management remarked that AI could now play a crucial part in IFAD's knowledge agenda, including the use of chatbots and building evidence-based content repositories.
27. **Agenda item 6: Thematic evaluation on IFAD's support to gender equality and women's empowerment (EC 2024/125/W.P.5 + Add. 1)**

Key messages:

- The Evaluation Committee emphasized the importance of attaining and maintaining gender parity, including at Senior Management level.
- Members encouraged greater collaboration with the Rome-based agencies (RBAs), UN Women and the broader United Nations system to strengthen efforts towards gender equality and women's empowerment.
- Committee members looked forward to the development of the updated gender policy and related action plan and recommended that the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment be taken into account in this regard.
- Context needed to be taken into consideration in developing tailored approaches to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in order to address prevailing social norms sensitively and appropriately. Capacity-building and gender-responsive training were fundamental in this respect.

28. The Evaluation Committee welcomed the thematic evaluation on IFAD's support to gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) during the period 2012–2023, as contained in document EC 2024/124/W.P.5, as well as Management's response, as contained in its addendum. Committee members also took note that the thematic evaluation would be submitted to the Board at its September session.
29. While the evaluation pointed to IFAD's limited success in scaling up tested approaches and policy engagement on gender equality, it noted that IFAD's strength lay in catalysing change and that its influence was largely concentrated at the community, household and individual levels. IOE highlighted the importance of endogenous change led by countries. Societal readiness and local contexts had a significant influence on outcomes; hence IFAD's role should support transformative processes while adapting to the unique circumstances of each region.
30. The challenges faced by IFAD in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment were commonly encountered by the RBAs and other United Nations agencies and international financial institutions. As such, one member suggested that IFAD seek alignment with these partners to share learning and address such challenges more comprehensively. IOE emphasized that informal and formal

collaboration with FAO and WFP was under way through the United Nations Evaluation Group, where approach papers and methodologies were shared to ensure harmonization and coherence. Management also pointed to ongoing collaboration with FAO and WFP, particularly through initiatives like the Joint Programme on Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women, which leveraged the strengths of each agency to improve the status of rural women.

31. Noting the importance that they attached to pursuing gender equality and women's empowerment, members expressed concern about the consistency of gender mainstreaming within IFAD's activities, the allocation of human resources and leadership's commitment to gender equality. IFAD should lead by example and ensure gender parity at all levels, especially during the recalibration and decentralization processes. There was a consensus on the need for continuous capacity-building and gender-responsive training within the organization and among its implementing partners, as well as a comprehensive, field-friendly gender toolkit and improved data collection and reporting. Members emphasized the need to disaggregate data by sex, age, disability and other variables to better understand the impact of activities and improve planning and implementation. The Committee expressed its commitment to supporting IFAD in these endeavours, highlighting the importance of measuring the effectiveness of gender equality and women's empowerment policies that are transformative, and ensuring that these initiatives led to meaningful and sustainable development outcomes.
32. On measurement and feedback, Management clarified that IFAD employed various guidance tools, although not all were updated or available in all United Nations official languages. Management noted that IFAD utilized tools jointly developed with other RBAs and that feedback mechanisms for beneficiaries, assessments and the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) were all integral to IFAD's strategy and involved both men and women to foster empowerment at the household level. One member underscored the need for these assessments to use both qualitative and quantitative approaches to measure outcomes such as gender empowerment, access to assets and income equality, in order to demonstrate a commitment to robust data collection and analysis. Management emphasized the ongoing work on a framework to identify activities to reach, benefit, empower and transform and to go beyond the current focus on outreach to rural men and women.
33. Members looked forward to considering IFAD's revised gender policy at the Executive Board in 2025. Developing the policy provided an opportunity to consider what gender equality and women's empowerment entailed at the community, project and policy levels, and how to better leverage partnerships, share lessons and scale up successes. A broad spectrum of stakeholders, including Member States, academia, and women's groups, would be consulted for the policy update. Furthermore, the role of multilateral climate funds in integrating gender issues within climate finance was recognized as critical for IFAD's ambitions related to climate change.
34. Management reflected on the ongoing challenge of prioritizing and budgeting within IFAD's limited operational capacity. Management proposed engaging Member States in discussions about budget prioritization as essential to reconciling strategic ambitions with available resources, ensuring that gender equality and women's empowerment remained central to IFAD's mission despite fiscal constraints.
35. Speaking on behalf of the Committee, the Chairperson conveyed heartfelt thanks to Ms Jo Puri, Associate Vice-President, Strategy and Knowledge Department, for her significant contributions to the Committee's work. The Chairperson praised her clarity, informative responses and commitment to development, noting that her presence would be greatly missed. In her response, Ms Puri expressed her deep gratitude to the Evaluation Committee, and her appreciation for the thoughtful and

substantive support from members, and their efforts to ensure integrity and honesty in their work. She emphasized the privilege it had been to work with the Committee and conveyed her sincere thanks.

Agenda item 7: Proposed dates for sessions of the Evaluation Committee in 2025 (EC 2024/125/W.P.6)

36. The Committee approved the proposed dates for the sessions of the Evaluation Committee in 2025, as contained in document EC 2024/125/W.P.6, namely:
- 128th session Wednesday, 19 March 2025
 - 129th session Tuesday, 10 June 2025
 - 130th session Friday, 5 September 2025
 - 131st session Thursday, 6 November 2025

Agenda item 8: Other business

37. The Director, IOE, informed the Committee of the departure of Mr Fabrizio Felloni, the Deputy Director of IOE, to join the Global Environment Facility's Independent Evaluation Office in Washington, D.C., starting August 2024. He praised Mr Felloni for his exemplary professionalism, support and significant contributions to IFAD over 22 years. Mr Felloni expressed his gratitude to the IOE Director, colleagues and Committee members for their support and guidance, stating that it had been an honour and privilege to have served the organization and its cause.

Closure of the session

38. The Chairperson concluded the session by bidding farewell to Mr Sylvain Fournel of France, expressing sadness at his departure from Rome this summer. The Chairperson thanked him for his insightful and constructive contributions to the Committee's work.