
2025 Report on IFAD's Mainstreaming Effectiveness (RIME)

Comments by the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD

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Action: The Evaluation Committee is invited to review comments by the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD on the 2025 Report on IFAD's Mainstreaming Effectiveness (RIME).

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2025 Report on IFAD's Mainstreaming Effectiveness (RIME)

Comments by the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD

1. The Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) welcomes the opportunity to submit, for the first time, its written comments on the Report on IFAD's Mainstreaming Effectiveness (RIME). During the 126th session of the Evaluation Committee (6 September 2024), IOE confirmed that it would be prepared to provide comments on the RIME, ensuring that the perspectives of both IOE and Management were presented to the Board. In line with that commitment, and consistent with IOE's mandate to enhance the Fund's self-evaluation system, this note offers an independent assessment of the 2025 RIME, highlighting strengths, areas for improvement and points of alignment with recent IOE evaluations.
2. The 2025 edition of the RIME provides a comprehensive overview of IFAD's mainstreaming efforts across key cross-cutting themes, including gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE), climate change adaptation and mitigation, nutrition, youth, Indigenous Peoples and persons with disabilities. The report consolidates available evidence from design, implementation and supervision, and outlines Management's planned actions to address persistent gaps. The comments below aim to further strengthen the RIME's performance reporting to better guide IFAD's strategic and operational direction and resource planning. This is in line with IOE's role to review and help enhance self-evaluation, as set out in the 2021 Revised IFAD Evaluation Policy.¹
3. **Proposed merger of the RIME with the Report on IFAD's Development Effectiveness (RIDE).** IOE recognizes the rationale for merging the RIME with the RIDE from the Thirteenth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources (IFAD13) onwards in order to streamline performance reporting and reduce fragmentation. A single, integrated report has merit, provided it retains the analytical depth and visibility needed to track progress on mainstreaming themes. To this end, IOE recommends that the merged RIDE continue to include a dedicated section for each mainstreaming area and that it also indicate how these themes are integrated and mutually reinforcing across country strategies and project operations. It should also preserve existing time series and indicator definitions to ensure comparability across replenishment cycles and present a clear comparison between self-evaluation and independent ratings for mainstreaming-related criteria. It will also be important to ensure full methodological alignment with the 2022 IFAD Evaluation Manual and to consult IOE in advance on any changes to rating frameworks, indicators or data sources. Finally, the Evaluation Committee should continue to review the mainstreaming content of the RIDE prior to Board submission, in line with current practice.
4. **Bridging the design–implementation gap.** Across mainstreaming themes, IOE evaluations show that projects with solid design frameworks too often stall in practice because they lack continuous technical back-up, ring-fenced funds and skills transfer. For gender, the RIME itself notes that supervision teams are frequently deployed without dedicated GEWE expertise and that project management units (PMUs) struggle with limited know-how. It recommends rostered consultants and sustained capacity development to remedy those shortcomings. Nutrition supervision is affected by similar constraints: since 2019 only one third of missions have included a nutrition expert, and short visits leave little time for

¹ [EB 2021/132/R.5/Rev.1](#)

hands-on guidance, undermining take-up of nutrition strategies; the thematic evaluation therefore highlights the need for mandatory budget allocations for nutrition activities in every annual workplan and budget and early deployment of specialist support. Climate adaptation work likewise depends on targeted technical assistance to PMUs and stronger, better-resourced project delivery teams, and the RIME notes that such support is still uneven and that more systematic staffing and on-call expertise will be required under IFAD13. Closing these gaps calls for: (i) ensuring that every supervision mission includes the relevant theme specialist or a qualified national counterpart; (ii) reserving dedicated budget envelopes for mainstreaming actions in project workplans; and (iii) scaling structured training and communities of practice so that government and PMU staff can internalize and sustain mainstreaming results.

5. **Declining gender performance.** GEWE performance continues to deteriorate. The 2025 Annual Report on the Independent Evaluation of IFAD (ARIE) records a clear fall in ratings, signalling a strategic “red flag” for the Fund’s development effectiveness. The RIME 2025 confirms the dip at completion, with only 40 per cent of projects now achieving a satisfactory or better score (5+), against the 60 per cent aspirational benchmark. The report links the decline mainly to supervision gaps related to the COVID-19 pandemic, thin government capacity and weak monitoring and evaluation systems. However, recent IOE evidence points to deeper, underreported drivers. The thematic evaluation on gender finds that many project designs still rely on participation quotas rather than transformative pathways, are informed by insufficient gender analysis and lack clear guidance on shifting gender norms, and it notes that these projects therefore struggle to translate outreach into empowerment outcomes. It also shows that ratings are applied uniformly across projects, masking differences in ambition and learning value. RIME briefly mentions this structural inconsistency, without further analysis. By foregrounding these systemic issues (over-standardized scoring, limited use of transformative approaches and inadequate outcome metrics), the next report could present a fuller picture of why GEWE results are faltering and what corrective actions are required under IFAD13. In this context, IOE recommends that the key findings and recommendations of the gender thematic evaluation be fully embedded in the forthcoming gender action plan to ensure strategic continuity and credible course correction.
6. **Nutrition results and data quality.** While the RIME acknowledges that 82 per cent of ongoing projects score 4 or better on nutrition during supervision and highlights progress against core indicators, it does not reflect three critical findings of the 2024 nutrition thematic evaluation and the nutrition chapter of the 2025 ARIE. First, beneficiary outreach is lagging: fewer than half of the six-million people in the target group for IFAD12 were reached, a shortfall the evaluation traces to limited budget allocations and weak borrower demand. Second, serious data quality problems affect both the minimum dietary diversity–women (MDD-W) and knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) survey indicators, including sampling errors, seasonality bias and inconsistent portion size definitions, which undermine comparability and trend analysis. Third, innovative nutrition-smart practices piloted in several projects (e.g. keyhole gardens, food-to-farm wholegrain utilization) remain isolated. IOE therefore recommends that future reports include a short subsection on nutrition outcome evidence that: (i) discloses progress against the outreach target; (ii) reports on the quality and validity of nutrition indicators and the corrective measures being adopted; and (iii) summarizes how proven innovations are being systematically replicated, with clear resource provisions in the forthcoming nutrition action plan.
7. **Outcome evidence for youth, Indigenous Peoples and disability themes.** IOE encourages Management to complement the design-level coverage of youth, Indigenous Peoples and disability inclusion with clear evidence of outcomes at

implementation and completion. The current RIME notes that a protocol to assess youth-sensitivity is still under development and that options for measuring employment outcomes are only being “assessed”; it likewise calls for stronger monitoring systems to track results related to Indigenous Peoples and recognizes that disability-disaggregated data remain scarce, with targeting strategies not always translating into tangible outreach and impact. IOE therefore requests that future reports present outcome indicators (e.g. youth employment generated, livelihood gains among Indigenous Peoples, disability-inclusive income or empowerment metrics), supported by systematically collected, disaggregated data. Strengthening this evidence base will allow the Board to gauge whether IFAD’s inclusiveness ambitions are yielding concrete benefits for the most marginalized groups and to allocate resources accordingly. In this context, IOE is also planning a thematic evaluation of IFAD’s engagement with Indigenous Peoples, as requested by Management and discussed during the 126th session of the Evaluation Committee.

8. **Integrated delivery of mainstreaming themes.** The RIME notes, in broad terms, that mainstreaming priorities are being “integrated” across country strategic opportunities programme, projects and action plans and that forthcoming strategies will “prioritize alignment and synergies” among them. It does not, however, provide concrete evidence of how themes interact in operations or what results integrated approaches have yielded. This contrasts with IFAD’s 2019 Framework for Implementing Transformational Approaches to Mainstreaming Themes, which highlights the importance of tracking combined outcomes across environment–climate, gender, nutrition and youth. To address this gap, IOE suggests adding a brief subsection under “Overall mainstreaming performance” that: (i) illustrates how multiple themes were intentionally combined in recent projects (e.g. climate-resilient, nutrition-smart value chains that empower women and engage youth); (ii) presents emerging outcome evidence on such integrated approaches; and (iii) outlines the tools and indicators planned to report synergistic results under IFAD13. This would help align the RIME with the Board’s transformational vision and clarify whether mainstreaming themes are delivering more collectively than in isolation.
9. **Summary.** IOE welcomes Management’s 2025 RIME and the proposed merger of the RIME with the RIDE, noting progress on mainstreaming targets and clearer technical support. However, IOE’s independent evidence points to systemic issues needing Board attention, including design–implementation gaps due to limited specialist support; declining GEWE ratings, requiring integration of gender evaluation recommendations into the new gender action plan; unresolved nutrition data and outreach gaps; missing outcome indicators for youth, Indigenous Peoples and disability inclusion; and limited evidence on how mainstreaming themes interact. IOE recommends the merged report retain dedicated mainstreaming sections, preserve comparability, disclose rating gaps and align with the 2022 IFAD Evaluation Manual, ensuring that resources and tools turn design goals into measurable IFAD13 outcomes.