
Minutes of the 131st session of the Evaluation Committee

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Technical questions:

Indran A. Naidoo

Director

Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD

e-mail: i.naidoo@ifad.org

Carola Alvarez

Managing Director

Office of Development Effectiveness

e-mail: c.alvarez@ifad.org

Minutes of the 131st session of the Evaluation Committee

1. The deliberations of the Evaluation Committee at its 131st session – held both in presence and virtually on 6 November 2025 – are reflected in the present minutes, which have been approved by the Committee and shared with the Executive Board for information.

Agenda item 1: Opening of the session

2. The session was attended by Committee members from Egypt, Finland, Germany, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Kingdom of the Netherlands, Nigeria (Chairperson) and Switzerland. Observers were present from Canada, China and France. Moreover, the session was attended by the Director, Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE); the Deputy Director, IOE; the Managing Director, Office of Development Effectiveness; the Associate Vice-President, Department for Country Operations (remotely); the Regional Director, Latin America and the Caribbean Division (remotely); the Secretary of IFAD; and other IFAD staff.
3. Ms Veronique Salze-Lozac'h, Chief Evaluator, Independent Evaluation Department, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and Chair of the External Peer Review Panel of IFAD's Evaluation Function; Mr Jorg Faust, Director, German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval); and Mr Per Øyvind Bastoe, Senior Consultant, participated in the deliberations on the approach paper of the third external peer review of IFAD's evaluation function by videoconference.
4. Mr José Luis Delgado Crespo, Chargé d'affaires a.i and Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of Mexico to the United Nations Rome-based agencies, delivered remarks on the country strategy and programme evaluation (CSPE) for the United Mexican States.

Agenda item 2: Adoption of the agenda (EC 2025/131/W.P.1)

5. The Committee adopted the agenda as contained in document EC 2025/131/W.P.1 (to be revised as EC 2025/131/W.P.1/Rev.1), with the addition of an item under other business, providing a presentation of the digital edition of the Report on IFAD's Development Effectiveness (RIDE) 2025.

Agenda item 3: Evaluation of IFAD's engagement in Small Island Developing States: Global and regional perspectives (EC 2025/131/W.P.2 + Add.1)

Key messages:

- Members commended the evaluation, noting the variety of contexts represented by the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and the need for differentiated, context-sensitive approaches that integrate social, economic, environmental, and institutional dimensions while balancing ambition with feasibility.
- Key ingredients for engagement were robust data for evidence-based decision-making, knowledge management and monitoring and evaluation strong partnerships and early engagement with partners, including the private sector, and a focus on institutional capacity-building for sustainability of benefits.

6. Members welcomed the comprehensive evaluation of IFAD's engagement in SIDS, while recognizing the complexity of conducting such evaluations and the difficulty in making recommendations applicable to a range of contexts with multidimensional vulnerabilities and climate risks.
7. They commended IFAD's work on climate-smart agriculture, food security and inclusive rural development, while noting gaps in holistic resilience approaches, marine ecosystem protection and institutional capacity-building. Members

acknowledged IFAD's niche role in addressing gaps often overlooked by other development actors, but encouraged IFAD to reflect on comparative advantage, institutional-strengthening and sustainable outcomes, particularly given resource constraints.

8. The Committee supported the recommendations to integrate social, economic and environmental dimensions into future strategies; strengthen partnerships, particularly collaboration with the private sector and research institutions; enhance knowledge management and gender-responsive interventions; and balance ambition with feasibility given high transaction costs. They also noted that data limitations were a key challenge and stressed the need for robust baselines to identify timely corrective measures.
9. Recognizing the diversity of SIDS in terms of geography, needs and capacities, members suggested assessing region-specific clusters in future evaluations for more tailored and in-depth results. Management supported this approach, and IOE noted that future cluster evaluations would involve Management in developing the approach paper in order to deliver more differentiated analyses, targeted findings and actionable recommendations. The scope of the SIDS evaluation had been determined using the current classification by Management.
10. Management concurred with the challenges flagged by members and underscored that high transaction costs and remoteness impacted the ability to fully address institutional capacity and data gaps. Sustainability and effectiveness depended on strong partnerships and engagement to secure government ownership.
11. Management clarified that the SIDS strategy prioritized building capacity, strengthening grassroots institutions and addressing fragility, while promoting cost-efficient interventions. The evaluation had shown that regional and multicountry programmes, particularly in the Pacific, were effective in achieving economies of scale and leveraging partnerships with regional institutions. In addition, synergies between grants and loans had been effective in supporting flexible regional financing, complementing national allocations and enhancing cross-country collaboration. Management clarified that IFAD worked in consultation with the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Development States and in alignment with international frameworks, including the SAMOA Pathway and the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS.

Agenda item 4: Results-based work programme and budget for 2026 and indicative plan for 2027-2028 of IOE (EC 2025/131/W.P.3)

Key messages:

- Members expressed overall support for IOE's budget for 2026 and indicative plan for 2027-2028, noting the expanded work programme, which demonstrated a strong commitment to enhancing both learning and accountability.
- Members welcomed the corporate-level evaluation on human resource management and the subregional evaluation on engagement in conflict-affected states in the Near East, North Africa and Europe region, emphasizing the importance of considering the ongoing UN80 process, IFAD's comparative advantage and findings from previous evaluations.
- Members appreciated the increased emphasis on the relationship between the independent evaluation and self-evaluation functions, and IOE's consideration of long-term impacts of IFAD operations, including during CSPEs.

12. The Evaluation Committee welcomed the proposed revised results-based work programme and budget for 2026, and indicative plan for 2027-2028 of IOE, as

contained in document EC 2025/131/W.P.3, which built on discussions with the Evaluation Committee at its 130th session, the Audit Committee at its 178th meeting, and the Executive Board at its 145th session held in September 2025. Members noted that the expanded work programme reflected a strong commitment to evidence-based accountability, institutional learning and the efficient use of resources.

13. Members looked forward to reviewing the approach paper for the planned corporate-level evaluation on IFAD's human resource management, noting that it could also cover the implementation of recommendations from the corporate-level evaluation of decentralization. Members welcomed IOE's clarification that the evaluation would draw on evidence from previous corporate- and country-level evaluations and address evidence gaps by focusing on aspects of human resource management not previously examined in depth.
14. Regarding the subregional evaluation on engagement in conflict-affected states in the Near East, North Africa and Europe region, IOE concurred with members on the importance of assessing IFAD's comparative advantage and added value in fragile contexts relative to other agencies, particularly in light of the ongoing UN80 process.
15. IOE's strong focus on gender-sensitive budgeting and its examination of gender-related issues in IFAD operations were commended, as was the attention given to "transformative" interventions, namely those that generate enduring, self-sustaining change beyond the period of IFAD or government support, demonstrating lasting systemic impact. Upcoming country strategy and programme evaluations could provide an opportunity to revisit projects completed more than 10 years ago (legacy projects) to assess their sustainability and lasting benefits. IOE committed to identifying a number of such interventions. Consideration would also be given to school meal programmes as a potential topic for a future thematic evaluation.
16. While applauding the integration of digital and AI-based tools in evaluation, members underscored the need to ensure ethical data use and respect for local knowledge systems. The importance of knowledge management and outreach was also highlighted, including as a means of strengthening national evaluation capacities and South-South cooperation. IOE informed members that it systematically monitored and benchmarked its knowledge management performance against that of peer organizations through a semi-annual internal report. The most recent report, which showed an upward trend over the past four years, would be made publicly available on the IOE website.

Agenda item 5: Approach paper of the third external peer review of IFAD's evaluation function (EC 2025/131/W.P.4 + Add.1 + Add.2)

Key messages:

- Members commended the proposed approach for the external peer review with its focus on strategic issues relating to credibility, independence and utility; and on the need to balance learning and accountability and bear in mind absorptive capacity with a view to strengthening the independent evaluation and self-evaluation functions as a cornerstone of the Fund's holistic evaluation system.
- Members highlighted the need for inclusive consultations to ensure meaningful engagement of all stakeholders, from governments to cofinanciers, donors and project participants. They called for actionable, realistic, and forward-looking recommendations underpinned by innovative evaluation methodologies, strengthened peer learning and enhanced inter-agency collaboration.

- The Chair of the External Peer Review Panel (EPRP), IOE and Management reaffirmed their commitment to an efficient and timely review focused on strengthening coordination between the evaluation functions, supporting ongoing institutional reforms, and ensuring that evaluations remained practical and credible.

17. Members expressed strong support for the external peer review process, commending its timeliness and strategic focus and joined IOE and Management in looking forward to the findings of the review and the opportunity to learn from the best practices of other institutions, assess IFAD's reform progress, and strengthen collaboration between self- and independent evaluation.
18. Members emphasized the need for inclusive consultations – particularly at the field and country levels – to ensure meaningful engagement of project participants, including smallholder farmers and rural entrepreneurs, alongside government and other institutional stakeholders. Members stressed the need for actionable and realistic recommendations that took into consideration IFAD's absorptive capacity in a resource-constrained environment and that would directly inform policy and programme design by balancing accountability and learning. They also highlighted the importance of adopting innovative methodologies to enhance data collection and resource efficiency; strengthening peer exchange and inter-agency collaboration to share best practices; promoting sustainable programme outcomes, reinforcing multilateral cooperation; and building robust country-level monitoring and evaluation capacities. Given that no country visits were planned, members underscored the importance of ensuring that field perspectives and country-level experience were adequately captured through other consultation modalities.
19. The discussion highlighted the need for adequate financial resources to ensure rigour and relevance and reaffirmed the value of incorporating both independent evaluations and self-evaluations to strengthen credibility, independence and learning, while addressing potential rating disconnects. The proposed budget had been established by the peer review team with efficiency in mind and had benefited from voluntary contributions and the support of three partner institutions, including a high-level panel.
20. The EPRP Chair thanked members for their feedback and assured them that the review would consider both IFAD's internal context and the broader environment. The review's strength lay in drawing on the Evaluation Cooperation Group's collective experience, including work on the ethical use of AI to enhance efficiency. Emphasizing inclusiveness and utility, the Chair confirmed that the review would deliver actionable, realistic and resource-conscious recommendations.

Agenda item 6: Provisional agenda of the Evaluation Committee for 2026 (EC 2025/131/W.P.5)

21. Concerns were raised about the dates for 2026, specifically with respect to the proximity to Eid al-Fitr to the 132nd session (scheduled for 18 March) and the scheduling of the 134th session close to the end of the summer holiday period. The Secretary clarified that scheduling was constrained by the calendar of the Rome-based agencies and the sequencing of Evaluation Committee and Executive Board sessions, which left very limited room for adjustments.
22. IOE noted that expanded CSPE coverage in 2026 could require adjusting session timing to align with evaluation schedules, country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP) presentations to the Executive Board and the duration of Committee sessions. IOE and Management confirmed that they would work closely with the Secretary to accommodate the increased workload.

Agenda item 7: Country strategy and programme evaluation for the United Mexican States (EC 2025/131/W.P.6 + Add.1)

Key messages:

- Members welcomed the comprehensive CSPE for Mexico and the strong alignment between Management and the Government on the recommendations, which provided important insights for the development of the new COSOP.
- While results were positive vis-à-vis relevance and effectiveness, outcomes were disappointing with regard to monitoring and evaluation, quality of data, innovation, South-South and Triangular Cooperation, scaling up, gender equality and women's empowerment, and targeting of Indigenous Peoples.
- Members emphasized the importance of partnerships and collaboration, and effective engagement with the private sector and international organizations.
- Members complained that the signed agreement at completion Point (ACP), which, per the IFAD Evaluation Manual "contains a summary of the evaluation findings and recommendations that IFAD Management and the government agree to adopt and implement within specific timeframes", had not been made available prior to the Evaluation Committee session.

23. The Evaluation Committee welcomed the CSPE for Mexico for 2018–2024, as contained in document EC 2025/131/W.P.6, the intervention delivered by the Government representative and Management's statement. Management expressed regret that the signed ACP had not been made available prior to the session, noting that extensive consultations with multiple ministries had been required to ensure full alignment on implementation of the recommendations. In this regard, the representative of the Government of Mexico reassured the Committee of its commitment to addressing the recommendations in close collaboration with Management.
24. Members appreciated the comprehensive nature of the evaluation, as its findings would inform Mexico's new COSOP. They noted the alignment between Management and the Government on the recommendations, despite the fact that the written Management response had not been circulated in advance. While progress was recognized in relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and mobilization of climate finance, several members noted the moderately unsatisfactory performance ratings in other areas. In particular, they noted that monitoring and evaluation, data quality, scaling up, sustainability, gender equality and women's empowerment, climate adaptation and innovation were all areas in need of strengthening.
25. Priority should also be given to strengthening private sector collaboration, leveraging South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC), enhancing partnerships with international organizations, and improved targeting. Some members acknowledged that Mexico met IFAD's Graduation Discussion Income threshold, while one member noted that using income as the sole indicator ran the risk of overlooking ongoing vulnerabilities and the need for continued support to marginalized groups.
26. Management noted that several challenges were driven by external factors, particularly the 2018 federal administration change. Partnership with the Government of Mexico had greatly improved, and was accompanied by renewed political will and engagement, as demonstrated during the IFAD President's visit in July 2025.

27. Management recognized that frequent turnover in the country director role had affected performance and trust-building; however it was confirmed that stable leadership and a strengthened regional management team were now in place. Private sector engagement was also being enhanced through a new regional investment officer based in Panama.
28. The evaluation's findings would be fully addressed in the new COSOP. Priorities would include targeting women and Indigenous and Afro-Mexican populations; strengthening monitoring and evaluation, data systems and knowledge management; and partnering with local academic institutions. The COSOP would be implemented with the support of the Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation (AMEXCID), thus strengthening potential SSTC linkages. Management also emphasized its commitment to fostering an enabling environment for private sector engagement, building strategic partnerships with multilateral development banks, and mobilizing climate finance to scale up impact.

Agenda item 8: Other business

29. Ms Erma Rheindrayani (Indonesia) temporarily assumed the Chair and presided over agenda item 8, other business, wherein Management introduced the fifth digital edition of the Report on IFAD's Development Effectiveness (RIDE), accessible on the IFAD [website](#). Management provided a brief overview of the main features of the digital edition, which presented IFAD's results from 2025, the IFAD12 reporting period and impact assessments in a dynamic manner. The digital edition would be translated into IFAD's official languages.

Closure of the session

30. Dr Yaya O. Olaniran (Nigeria) reassumed the role of Chair. On behalf of the Committee and given that Ms Erma Rheindrayani was attending her last Evaluation Committee session, he thanked her for her important contributions to the deliberations of the Committee and wished her the very best for her future endeavours.
31. The Committee was reminded that the Office of the Secretary would share the draft minutes of the session, inclusive of the key messages shared by Committee members, for approval. Once finalized, the minutes would be submitted to the Executive Board for information at its 146th session.