



Investing in rural people

Evaluation Committee

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Comments of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD on the Report of the third External Peer Review of IFAD's Evaluation Function

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Action: The Evaluation Committee is invited to review the comments of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD on the Report of the third External Peer Review of IFAD's Evaluation Function.

Useful references: Revised IFAD Evaluation Policy ([EB 2021/132/R.5/Rev.1](#)), Multi-Year Evaluation Strategy of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD ([EC 2021/114/W.P.8](#)), IFAD revised Evaluation Manual – Part 1 ([EB 2022/135/R.29](#)).

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I. Background and general comments

1. The Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) welcomes this third external peer review (EPR) of IFAD's evaluation function, and appreciates the value of this objective assessment to further strengthen evaluation at IFAD. The EPR panel members represent the three evaluation networks of which IOE is a member: the Evaluation Cooperation Group, the United Nations Evaluation Group, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Evaluation Network. This ensures that the review's framework – which is organized around the pillars of independence, credibility and utility – adheres to the guidance and standards of each network.
2. The 2019 EPR resulted in a significant revision of the IFAD Evaluation Policy, the development of a Multi-Year Evaluation Strategy, and the revision of the IFAD Evaluation Manual. These three foundational documents have enabled IOE to further strengthen its independence, quality, credibility and utility, and to expand its coverage for greater learning and accountability. The current EPR is set within a context of increasing global challenges and recognizes the role that rigorous evidence plays in navigating these challenges to enable IFAD to achieve its vision of rural transformation.
3. IOE welcomes the EPR report, which provides an opportunity to reflect on both strengths and areas for improvement. It is also a key input to further strengthen the complementarity between the independent and the self-evaluation functions of IFAD, as a mutually reinforcing evidence-based ecosystem that enables continuous learning, improvement, accountability and results at project, country and corporate levels. As an independent office, IOE views the EPR as a critical accountability mechanism to ensure that the office continues to hold itself to high quality standards and provide relevant, timely and strategic inputs into decision-making and future directions for IFAD, and a learning opportunity for the evaluation function.
4. The EPR followed an extensive but efficient process to produce a credible and comprehensive report with useful and relevant recommendations for the future of the IFAD evaluation function. The process included surveys of staff and Executive Board members, key stakeholder interviews, a quality assessment of IOE reports and consideration of self-assessments from IFAD's independent and self-evaluation functions. It benefited from an external panel of heads of evaluation and consultants with extensive experience in independent evaluation and familiarity with international standards. IOE is committed to implementing the recommendations that it accepts in a timely manner.
5. IOE appreciates the EPR's recognition of the credibility, independence and utility of IOE evaluations. The report notes that the changes introduced since the 2019 EPR have resulted in more robust standards, an increase in coverage, the safeguarding of independence, greater efficiency, and efforts to improve stakeholder engagement. IOE also appreciates the report's recognition of the role of both Management and IOE in improving complementarity between independent and self-evaluation, and to steer IFAD as a learning organization with an enabling environment for evaluation use. IOE also welcomes the suggestions for improving its strategic approach, sharpening and prioritizing recommendations, and ensuring that it has the correct skills and product mix in place to respond to evolving global challenges, and the institutional reforms required to meet them. The IOE response to the EPR recommendations is set forth below, and the office commits to developing a detailed action plan to implement the agreed recommendations.¹

¹ Provisionally to be presented at the 134th Evaluation Committee session in September 2026.

II. Specific responses to the recommendations of the external peer review

6. **Recommendation 1. IOE should rebalance its product mix by improving selectivity, so that resources are focused on strategically chosen evaluations that enhance the usefulness of evaluation for timely and informed decision-making.**
7. IOE broadly agrees with this recommendation, which is strongly aligned with IOE's focus on improved utility. IOE will continue to strengthen its strategic approach to work programming using a mix of consultations and internal analyses to determine evaluation areas that will yield timely inputs for corporate priorities and strategies and respond to the complex and interconnected challenges of the global operating context. The evaluation of IFAD's use of supplementary resources currently under way, and the planned evaluation of IFAD's engagement with the private sector reflect a commitment to this approach. Recognizing the utility of the corporate-level evaluation of the institutional and operational performance under IFAD11 and IFAD12, IOE will consider regular evaluations of future replenishments. At country level, IOE will continue to use country strategic opportunities programme development processes as the key consideration in its country strategy and programme evaluations, as well as portfolio size and related key criteria.
8. With the increase in coverage, IOE has expanded the overall evidence base from which cross-context learnings can be extracted. Therefore, IOE fully agrees that increased development and use of meta-evaluations and evaluation syntheses will be a key opportunity to harness findings for learning both across operations and at corporate level. However, IOE believes that it should continue conducting a limited number of project performance evaluations as these serve not only as building blocks for country and corporate evidence, but also allow for a deeper dive into operational successes and bottlenecks.
9. **Recommendation 2. Management should increase efforts to improve self-evaluation and together with IOE refine complementarity with independent evaluations, enabling stronger learning loops and more consistent use of evaluative insights in decision-making.**
10. IOE agrees with this recommendation, which recognizes the value of strong and complementary independent and self-evaluation functions, and looks forward to continuing to strengthen its collaboration and complementarity with the Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE). IOE will work with ODE to review and continue to clarify the division of labour between the two offices to strengthen the comparative advantage of each and to ensure harmonization and relevant levels of coherence between methodologies and evaluation criteria, including impact.
11. **Recommendation 3. IFAD should strengthen its learning culture by fostering closer collaboration between Management and the evaluation function, with the objective of improving the uptake and use of evaluation lessons in strategic and operational decisions.**
12. IOE agrees with this recommendation and commits to remaining positioned to enable improved corporate learning and reflection. IOE supports measures to strengthen both its own and Management's accountability for uptake and meaningful implementation of evaluation recommendations. IOE will continue to strengthen its communication, dissemination and learning activities in coordination with IFAD, external stakeholders and the Executive Board. IOE will also review its flagship report – the Annual Report on the Independent Evaluation of IFAD (ARIE) – to provide more streamlined and strategic lessons from evaluation – a process that has already started with the 2026 ARIE.
13. **Recommendation 4. IOE should increase the focus and clarity of its recommendations to strengthen their actionability and decision-making value.**

14. IOE partially agrees with this recommendation: it consistently strives to ensure that its evaluation recommendations are clear, actionable and address the root causes of the evaluation findings and conclusions, and it commits to improving in this area. IOE reduced the number of report recommendations as a result of the 2019 EPR, but notes that more complex recommendations have introduced complexities in tracking. At the same time, the depth and breadth of IOE evaluations, particularly at corporate and country levels, typically reveal a substantial number of areas to be addressed. In order to strike the balance between accountability and actionability, IOE will review its recommendation development process, while continuing to safeguard its independence in determining the final recommendations. While IOE does include consultations and review with Management as part of the development process, it will plan for more systematic consultations to ensure actionability, clarity and value addition of recommendations, and indicate their level of prioritization and criticality, where possible. IOE will also incorporate more systematically considerations related to the operating context and external environment in developing recommendations.
15. IOE maintains that its recommendations are well-substantiated by findings and conclusions and uses internal quality assurance processes to verify this. While IOE appreciates the suggestion for greater transparency on data quality and triangulation, it believes that this suggestion may compromise independence by implying Management engagement in independent evaluation processes, and considers the office's internal quality assurance to be an adequate safeguard. IOE disagrees that it should conduct evaluations to monitor the implementation of recommendations, as this is the responsibility of Management. However, IOE fully supports enhanced verification and accountability on recommendation uptake and results and commits to engaging with Management on options to implement this suggestion.
16. **Recommendation 5. ODE and IOE should strengthen collaboration with relevant global initiatives² on M&E capacity development to clarify roles, strengthen capabilities, and improve the decision-making value of monitoring and evaluation both internally and with country partners.**
17. IOE agrees with this recommendation and believes that the roles and responsibilities of ODE and IOE on capacity development are already clear. IOE does not engage in direct evaluation capacity development efforts but will continue to support evaluation capacity development efforts through the Global Evaluation Initiative. However, IOE fully agrees that increased discussion and information sharing between IOE and ODE on capacity development is beneficial to complementarity in their activities.
18. **Recommendation 6. The Executive Board should reaffirm its commitment to the 2021 Evaluation Policy and safeguard the independence of IOE and the role of ODE by clarifying the annexes in the policy.**
19. While this recommendation is not directed at IOE, the office fully agrees that the role of the Executive Board in maintaining and safeguarding IOE independence is essential for accountability and credibility of its work. It is particularly important that the selection of the IOE Director is merit-based and free from influence to ensure a strong, credible and independent evaluation function. To reinforce this, IOE supports the EPR suggestion of an amendment to the annex of the Evaluation Policy on the procedure for selecting the IOE Director. This addresses the issues with the current procedure and will ensure full alignment of the new procedure with multilateral development bank standards for the selection of heads of independent evaluation offices.

² Like the Global Evaluation Initiative (GEI), including the Center for Learning on Evaluation and Results (CLEAR).