

# External Peer Review of IFAD's Evaluation Function

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*"A strong function that will need to become more strategic to accompany IFAD in the future"*

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# Purpose

Examines the evaluation function at IFAD

To enhance the evaluation function's contribution to the Fund's development effectiveness and institutional efficiency

Serves as the mid-term review of the multi-year Evaluation Strategy

Assesses the implementation of recommendations of the 2019 external peer reviews

# Approach

1

## Document Review

400+ evaluation products, policy documents, strategies and prior EPR reports reviewed, including all management responses.

2

## Online Survey

~200 respondents: Executive Board members, IFAD Management, staff across departments, partner organizations and government representatives.

3

## Interviews

60+ key informants at IFAD headquarters and country offices, member states and peer organizations from the MDB and UN system.

4

## Benchmarking

Comparison of IFAD's evaluation function with those of 8 peer institutions (multilateral development banks and UN agencies).

# The Evaluation Function at IFAD

## INDEPENDENT EVALUATION — IOE

Independent evaluation conducted by IOE, covering a range of independent evaluations at different levels to strengthen accountability and learning.

## MANAGEMENT SELF-EVALUATION — ODE

Management self-evaluation to provide real-time feedback; to learn from experience; and to provide and report on aggregate impact according to the strategic framework.

# Context

A decade of institutional reforms to transform the organization

New financial architecture with increased focus on private sector operations and access to alternative funding sources

Recalibration of the Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE)

Upcoming IFAD replenishment – IFAD14 for 2028-2031

Uncertain global political economy

# Main Findings

Overall: A strong function that will need to become more strategic to accompany IFAD in the future

All EPR 2019 recommendations implemented. The current review finds that the direction is right, but implementation depth, prioritization and system-wide coherence now matter more than further expansion.

For IOE, the main challenge is strategic focus and use — not quality or independence.

Greater selectivity, improved complementarity with self-evaluation, and more actionable recommendations are critical to enhance impact.

For self-evaluation, the main challenge is consistency of quality and relevance for learning.

An AI strategy would help identify opportunities for increased efficiency and provide a framework for sustainable and ethical use of AI in evaluation.

# Key Findings by Criterion

## CREDIBILITY

**STRONG & TRUSTED**

IOE evaluations are widely viewed as credible and methodologically sound, with improving efficiency. Stronger strategic prioritization and more focused reporting are needed to maximize relevance and impact.

## INDEPENDENCE

**WELL-ESTABLISHED**

Strong structural safeguards, direct Board reporting, separate budget. The 2021 Evaluation Policy is adequate. Targeted clarifications in the annexes are needed to avoid ambiguity.

## UTILITY

**VALUE RECOGNIZED**

IOE evaluations are widely valued but utility is constrained by numerous sub-recommendations, staff burden and weak follow-up verification. A focused ARIE could be presented to the Board annually.

# Key Findings by Criterion

## COMPLEMENTARITY

IMPROVING

Complementarity and collaboration between Management self-evaluation and IOE have improved. Further alignment, dialogue and shared standards are needed to strengthen accountability and learning.

## MANAGEMENT & STAFFING

BROADER SKILLS NEEDED

IOE has resources but needs broader skills and proactive capacity to meet IFAD's evolving demands, especially in non-sovereign operations and new financing instruments.

## LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

GREAT POTENTIAL

IFAD values evaluation and learning, but evidence of use is uneven. Delays, capacity gaps and weak knowledge management limit uptake. AI-enabled synthesis could strengthen impact.

# Recommendations (1 – 3)

6 of 6

*Overall objective: to increase the alignment between the evaluation function and IFAD's strategy and reform processes.*

IOE

1

## Rebalance the product mix

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.

Management

2

## Strengthen self-evaluation & complementarity with IOE

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.

IFAD

3

## Strengthen the learning culture

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.

# Recommendations (4 – 6)

6 of 6

*Overall objective: to increase the alignment between the evaluation function and IFAD's strategy and reform processes.*

IOE

4

## **Increase focus and clarity of recommendations**

IOE should increase the focus and clarity of its recommendations to strengthen their actionability and decision-making value.

ODE & IOE

5

## **Strengthen M&E capacity development**

ODE and IOE should strengthen collaboration with relevant global initiatives 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.

Executive Board

6

## **Reaffirm commitment to the 2021 Evaluation Policy**

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.

**The evaluation function has the potential to provide even more strategic value to IFAD in the future.**

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## **What needs to happen:**

IOE: be more selective, more strategic, more actionable in recommendations

Management: raise self-evaluation quality and use; leverage complementarity with IOE

IFAD: build a learning culture that translates evaluation evidence into decisions

Executive Board: protect independence and hold all parties accountable