Investing in rural people

**Evaluation Committee**
134th Session
Rome, 4 September 2026

# Minutes of the 134th session of the Evaluation Committee

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# Minutes of the 134th session of the Evaluation Committee

1. The deliberations of the Evaluation Committee at its 134th session – held both in presence and virtually on 4 September 2026 – are reflected in the present minutes, which have been approved by the Committee and are shared with the Executive Board for information.

**Agenda item 1: Opening of the session**

2. The session was attended by Committee members from Finland, Germany, Indonesia, Mexico, Kingdom of the Netherlands, Nigeria (Chairperson) and Switzerland. Observers were present from Canada, China, France and the United States. Moreover, the session was attended by the Director and Deputy Director, Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE); the Managing Director, Office of Technical Delivery and Managing Director a.i., Office of Development Effectiveness; the Associate Vice-President, Department for Country Operations; the Chief Legal and Governance Officer; the Director, Environment, Climate and Peoples Division; the Secretary of IFAD; and other IFAD staff.

3. The Chairperson, Dr Yaya O. Olaniran (Nigeria), informed the Committee that he was unable to attend in person and would preside over the session remotely.

**Agenda item 2: Adoption of the agenda (EC 2026/134/W.P.1)**

4. The Committee adopted the agenda as contained in document EC 2026/134/W.P.1, with the addition, under other business, of an update on the progress made regarding the selection of the IOE Director since the Committee last met in July.

**Agenda item 3: 2026 Annual Report on the Independent Evaluation of IFAD (ARIE) (EC 2026/134/W.P.2 + Add.1)**

Key messages:

- Members commended the comprehensiveness of the report and noted the positive progress in core performance areas. They welcomed the attention to private sector engagement, value chains, rural youth and fragile contexts.
- Members emphasized the need to build on lessons learned in areas where performance challenges persisted, particularly non-lending activities, knowledge-sharing, policy dialogue, private sector partnerships, youth inclusion, value chain development and operations in fragile settings.

5. Members welcomed the ARIE and congratulated IOE and IFAD on the reported improvements in effectiveness, efficiency, gender equality, decentralization and post-COVID performance. They also appreciated the report's focus on private sector engagement, value chains, rural youth and IFAD's increased attention to fragile contexts.

6. Members raised several methodological issues. They requested a sensitivity analysis of project-level results by project size, noting that simple averages could give equal weight to projects with very different financial scales. Members also asked for greater clarity on specific country-level findings, including the areas for improvement, namely value chain development, private sector engagement and youth engagement. They requested further explanation of how these conclusions were reached and how Management intended to respond. In addition, several members questioned the discontinuation of mandatory rural poverty impact ratings in project completion reports, expressing concern that this could delay corrective action. Members also sought clarification on the gap between project- and country-

level ratings for scaling up and encouraged greater visibility of the distribution of moderately satisfactory, satisfactory and highly satisfactory ratings.

7. Members commented on other areas identified as needing improvement, particularly non-lending activities, knowledge management, policy engagement, monitoring of private sector engagement, value chain development, youth engagement, and work in fragile contexts. It was noted that weaknesses in private sector partnerships, market integration, enabling policy environments, and young people’s access to land, capital and assets appeared to echo findings from earlier evaluations. Management was asked to clarify whether these issues were still valid and what corrective measures were being taken. Furthermore, members encouraged IOE to examine the additionality of supplementary funds in youth-related activities, strengthen learning from experience in fragile contexts, and assess how cooperation with other international organizations could improve results.

8. In terms of methodology, IOE clarified that the ARIE had introduced additional variables to better assess the factors influencing project performance across different contexts, including project duration and categorization by macro area. IOE noted that project size, in budgetary terms, could be considered in future editions as methodology continued to evolve. IOE also indicated that discussions with Management were ongoing regarding the rural poverty impact rating. On scaling up, IOE noted that the observed differences were likely linked to the different timeframes and sample sizes used for project-level and country-level assessments.

9. Management acknowledged IOE’s findings and members’ comments, and agreed on the importance of non-lending activities, policy engagement, knowledge management and IFAD’s role as a broker of expertise and partnerships. While decentralization had strengthened policy engagement, the small size of country teams and the breadth of their responsibilities were limiting factors. In terms of knowledge management, Management noted ongoing efforts to strengthen learning loops from projects, including through the recalibration of the Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) and initiatives such as the project management unit (PMU) academy programme.

10. On value chains and private sector engagement, Management highlighted that IFAD had drawn lessons from the Twelfth Replenishment of IFAD’s Resources (IFAD12) impact assessment, which had underscored the relevance of value chains and private sector actors in achieving impact. These lessons would be reflected in IFAD14 and in operations, with private sector engagement moving from an ad hoc to a more systematic and institutionalized approach, supported by the private sector strategy and improved tracking of partnerships and activities. It was noted that although the rural poverty impact rating had been removed, IFAD continued to report on rural poverty impact through more specific indicators such as income and productivity.

11. Turning to scaling up, Management explained that differences in scaling-up results reflected changes in definitions and methodology. Further work with IOE would help clarify evidence requirements and strengthen institutional uptake. On youth and gender, Management highlighted efforts to address barriers to youth participation and to systematically capture lessons from strongly performing projects, for example the benefits of market linkages for women. Management pointed out the operational challenges of working in fragile contexts, particularly in monitoring and evaluation, financial management and project leadership. Training, succession planning and stronger coordination and partnerships to strengthen implementation capacity and national capacities were important in addressing these challenges.

**Agenda item 4: 2026 Report on IFAD's Development Effectiveness (RIDE), inclusive of the 2026 Report on IFAD’s Mainstreaming Effectiveness (RIME) as an annex (EC 2026/134/W.P.3 + Add.1)**

Key messages:

- Members welcomed the integrated RIDE/RIME reporting format and noted continued progress across several IFAD13 priorities. However, clearer corrective actions and timelines were needed in areas where performance was still below target.
- Members encouraged stronger results measurement and clearer trend analysis, including for non-sovereign operations, rural poverty impact, policy engagement and learning from project completion reports.
- Sustainability and cofinancing remained key areas of focus, with members seeking greater clarity on exit strategies, institutional ownership, recurrent financing and private sector contributions, particularly in fragile and low-income contexts.

12. Members welcomed the 2026 report, which integrated the RIME with the RIDE, noting that the streamlined format provided a clearer overview of recent performance and incremental progress against IFAD13 indicators. They particularly appreciated the progress in climate finance, gender-transformative project design, implementation support, biodiversity and disability inclusion. Members also welcomed IFAD’s ambition to mobilize additional development finance, expand private sector engagement, and strengthen its work in fragile contexts. At the same time, members requested concrete corrective measures and timelines for areas that remained below target, including nutrition-sensitive design and the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples and persons with disabilities.

13. On results measurement, members questioned whether stakeholder surveys on country-level policy engagement had generated specific recommendations and asked when data from country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP) completion reports (CCRs) would become available. They also sought clarification on how and when the Results Management Framework would be adapted to better capture non-sovereign operations, particularly in preparation for IFAD14. Members emphasized that project completion reports should continue to assess the extent to which interventions contributed to rural poverty reduction and sought clarification on how lessons learned were being reflected in programme and project design. Members suggested that future reports include clearer comparisons between current and previous replenishment cycles to demonstrate trends and assess the effects of corrective actions.

14. Sustainability was identified as a recurring area requiring attention. Members questioned the contrast between the high proportion of projects rated moderately satisfactory or better for sustainability at closure and the weaknesses frequently identified in country strategy and programme evaluations (CSPEs) concerning exit strategies. Clarification was sought on measures initiated to strengthen institutional ownership, recurrent financing, operation and maintenance, and the development of credible exit strategies. On cofinancing, members welcomed the strong domestic cofinancing ratio as a positive signal of confidence, while noting the limited contribution from the private sector, particularly in lower-income countries.

15. IOE noted the ongoing dialogue on methodological with Management, particularly on the assessment and comparability of evaluation criteria. This included the declining availability of rural poverty impact ratings in project completion reports and differing approaches to assessing environment and natural resources management and climate change adaptation. IOE saw opportunities to draw on the

practices of multilateral development banks (MDBs) to assess additionality in the evaluation of IFAD's growing portfolio of private sector investments.

16. In response, Management stated that CCR results would be reported at the end of the IFAD13 cycle, in 2028, and clarified that stakeholder surveys on country-level policy engagement were voluntary and did not systematically generate recommendations. However, demand for such engagement was generally higher in upper-middle-income countries. Declining grant financing remained a key constraint. It was confirmed that results from non-sovereign operations would be reflected in the IFAD14 cycle and that work was ongoing with the Private Sector Operations Division and other MDBs to refine definitions and align reporting methodologies.

17. On sustainability, Management acknowledged that further attention was needed, particularly in fragile situations. The sustainability action plan, introduced under IFAD12 aimed to integrate sustainability earlier in the project cycle by requiring teams to identify exit pathways, strengthen institutional ownership, and monitor exit strategies at design and midterm. Similarly, the multiphase approach could support sustainability by enabling learning and adjustments between phases. Management added that the revised Evaluation Manual broadened the definition of sustainability to include financial, economic, environmental and institutional dimensions and recognized the need to continue working with IOE to provide a clear and practical framework for project teams.

18. Management clarified that rural poverty impact was no longer a stand-alone rating under the streamlined Evaluation Manual. However, it continued to be assessed under the effectiveness criterion and could be revisited through the external peer review action plan with IOE. On cofinancing, Management noted that private sector engagement remained challenging in fragile and low-income countries because of higher risks and weaker market conditions, while the global economic context was challenging for domestic cofinancing. IFAD was also strengthening data collection and working with other MDBs to clarify definitions of private sector cofinancing and leverage, which could help capture currently underreported contributions.

19. Management acknowledged the challenges related to nutrition-sensitive design and highlighted that the action plan and direct country-level engagement would help meet the target. On Indigenous Peoples, a two-step approach was being followed, through the Indigenous Peoples' Forum and project-level engagement aligned with the Social, Environmental and Climate Assessment Procedures (SECAP), to ensure that Indigenous Peoples were actively involved in project design and implementation.

**Agenda item 5: 2026 President's Report on the Implementation Status of Evaluation Recommendations and Management Actions (PRISMA) (EC 2026/134/W.P.4 + Add.1)**

Key messages:

- Members welcomed the continued evolution of the PRISMA as a tool for learning and accountability, noting the narrowing gap between Management's and IOE's assessments and the importance of ongoing dialogue to ensure that recommendations were relevant, realistic and implementable across diverse country contexts.
- Members requested that evaluation findings and recommendations be reflected more systematically in institutional processes, including monitoring and evaluation capacity-building efforts and COSOP preparation.

20. Members welcomed the PRISMA report and noted the strengthened rigour of Management's self-assessment, as reflected in the narrowing gap between IOE's evaluations and Management's self-evaluations. At its 130th session, the Committee had supported the evolution of the PRISMA towards a more learning-oriented platform and the introduction of the online tracker and dashboard, while preserving the report's accountability function. While recognizing the tracker as a valuable transparency tool, members noted that it was not subject to direct review by the Committee. It was therefore considered important that the PRISMA retain a meaningful accountability function, given the Committee's governance role in overseeing follow-up and accountability.

21. Members highlighted the need for clearer definitions and more substantive information on recommendations classified as "partially followed up" and "ongoing". They also encouraged the inclusion, where feasible, of clearer implementation timelines to avoid recommendations remaining open indefinitely.

22. Members welcomed the increased follow-up rate and the continued commitment to strengthening monitoring and evaluation (M&E) capacity and emphasized the importance of robust M&E systems. They sought clarification on whether specific initiatives and instruments referenced in the previous PRISMA report, including the IFAD Operations Academy (OPAC), PRiME Phase III and M&E action plans, remained in place, and requested examples of systemic or institutional commitments to strengthening M&E capacity. Members also welcomed the integration of evaluation follow-up into the PMU academy programme and underscored the value of a shared understanding of evaluation recommendations among implementing countries and Management. Members suggested that, where relevant, recommendations should be reflected more systematically in COSOPs and future COSOP discussions.

23. Management welcomed members' comments and feedback and emphasized that the PRISMA aimed to maintain an appropriate balance between learning and accountability. Regarding the distinction between recommendations classified as "partially implemented" and those classified as "ongoing", the former referred to cases in which IFAD had addressed part of a recommendation or had adopted an approach not fully aligned with it, while the latter referred to recommendations for which implementation had begun but was still in progress.

24. Management confirmed that efforts to strengthen M&E capacity were on track, including through PRiME Phase III, OPAC training, the PMU academy programme, and collaboration with the World Bank's Pioneers Program and other multilateral development banks. It also noted that reporting timelines varied according to the nature of the recommendations: those stemming from corporate-level evaluations were reported on until completion, while project- and country-level evaluation recommendations were generally reported on more promptly. Management further noted that uptake of COSOP-related recommendations improved when CSPEs were timed to inform the preparation of new country strategies, thereby facilitating the integration of evaluation findings and recommendations into subsequent strategic and programming processes.

**Agenda item 6: Preview of the results-based work programme and budget for 2027, and indicative plan for 2028–2029 of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (EC 2026/134/W.P.5)**

Key messages:

- Members welcomed IOE's proposed 2027 work programme and budget, including the reduced budget and adherence to the ceiling, while seeking assurance that this would not affect delivery of planned results, evaluation quality or key performance indicators.

- Members encouraged IOE to continue shifting towards strategic learning and knowledge generation, including through higher-level, thematic and regional evaluations.
- Members supported the proposed strategic evaluation topics – including private sector engagement, rural youth, fragile contexts, Indigenous Peoples and persons with disabilities – and suggested consideration of emerging areas such as artificial intelligence, fintech and school feeding programmes.

25. Evaluation Committee members welcomed the preview of the IOE results-based work programme and budget for 2027, and indicative plan for 2028–2029, as contained in document EC 2026/134/W.P.5.

26. Members appreciated the proposed budget reduction and adherence to the budget ceiling, but sought assurance that the lower allocation would not affect IOE’s delivery of planned results or key performance indicators. Clarifications were requested on the reduced resources for project-level evaluations, unchanged funding for knowledge-sharing, and on activities potentially affected by the lower budget. They also asked about possible further efficiencies, including through streamlined communication products; whether resources could support capacity in emerging areas such as artificial intelligence, fintech and other strategic development issues; and whether the 2026 key performance indicators would continue to apply in 2027, particularly for follow-up on recommendations that were partially or fully agreed.

27. Queries were raised on the implementation of the external peer review (EPR) recommendations, particularly the product mix and continued emphasis on CSPEs. Members encouraged IOE to consider whether the work programme sufficiently reflected a shift towards strategic learning, thematic analysis and knowledge generation, and whether regional approaches could reduce costs while strengthening cross-country learning. Members also sought further information on IOE’s planned follow-up to the peer review, including the rationale for envisaging an action plan in 2027.

28. Members supported the strategic focus of the proposed work programme, including planned and ongoing work on private sector engagement, rural youth, fragile contexts, Indigenous Peoples and persons with disabilities. They stressed the importance of conducting evaluations in close consultation with the governments concerned and with full regard to national contexts. IOE could also consider future strategic evaluations of topics of growing relevance, such as work on school feeding programmes, noting their links to smallholder integration, rural economies, youth, health, education and migration. With regard to the ongoing corporate-level evaluation of supplementary resources, members pointed out the risk that such resources could pull organizations towards donor priorities and expressed the expectation that the evaluation would shed light on any potential tensions or contradictions arising from their use.

29. IOE expressed appreciation for the constructive comments and noted that it had maintained fiscal discipline while enhancing productivity and reducing the unit cost of evaluations. Efficiency gains had been supported by IOE’s internal conduct model and the use of artificial intelligence. The Evaluation Advisory Panel (EAP) and the EPR had confirmed the continuing improvement in evaluation quality and coverage. IOE indicated that it had achieved a balanced ratio in the budget vis-à-vis staffing and outputs but would consider the additional strategic topics raised by members, assess their costs and present options at the next session. Any additional work could be accommodated within the overall resource envelope, although a modest budget adjustment might be required.

30. IOE further noted that, in coordination with ODE, it was already considering the development of an action plan in response to the EPR recommendations, which could be informed by input from the EAP. The high uptake of IOE recommendations was evidence of the relevance of its work and Management's receptiveness, rather than any compromise to its independence or analytical rigour. IOE confirmed that CSPEs would remain central to its work, while its product mix would increasingly include higher-level and strategic evaluations.

**Agenda item 7: Draft revised annex I of the IFAD Evaluation Policy – Joint proposal by IOE and Management (C.R.P.1)**

Key messages:

- Members welcomed the collaborative spirit that informed the joint IOE–Management response to recommendation 6 of the EPR.
- The Committee stressed the need to keep the IOE Director recruitment on track and ensure the integrity and independence of the process.
- The Executive Board would consider the EPR and decide whether to review the joint proposal presented in the conference room paper.

31. IOE and Management presented a joint response to recommendation 6 of the EPR, specifically the revised annex I of the IFAD Evaluation Policy. This was well received by members who appreciated the spirit of collaboration characterizing the process. The Committee stressed the importance of keeping the recruitment process on track, while ensuring transparency, integrity and due process to reinforce the independence of IOE and the role of the Board.

32. Members largely welcomed the addition of the sentence that reiterated the exclusive responsibility of the Executive Board for the selection of the IOE Director. One member questioned whether there should be more review time before a decision.

33. Responding to a procedural query regarding the sequencing of the Board's consideration of the EPR and the joint proposal on revisions to the IFAD Evaluation Policy, Management confirmed that the EPR Chair would present the review at the September session of the Executive Board. The Board would then decide whether to consider the joint IOE and Management proposal. The General Counsel advised that since the Board would be called upon to consider the Evaluation Committee's recommendation as regards the recommended candidate(s) for the position of IOE Director in December, any decisions regarding the procedure to be followed – including any proposed revisions thereto – would need to be approved at the September session or consideration deferred to the April Board session in 2027 in order to avoid any mid-course amendments.

**Agenda item 8: Other business**

34. The Secretary provided updates on the progress made regarding the selection of the IOE Director since the Committee last met in July. These included the finalization of the search panel's composition; the election of Ms Nalan Yuksel as Chairperson; the panel's review of the vacancy announcement and related modalities; the issuance of the vacancy announcement on 31 July, with a closing date of 9 September; and the engagement of SRI Executive as the executive search firm. The panel's meetings in September would focus on shortlisting candidates, assessment modalities and interview questions. Interviews were expected to be completed by mid-October. The panel would then prepare its report for consideration by the Evaluation Committee at a special session, tentatively scheduled for 28 October, ahead of deliberations by the Executive Board at its December session.