Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD

The Independent Office of Evaluation (IOE) conducts evaluations of IFAD-financed policies, strategies and operations to promote accountability and learning. The main purpose is to contribute to improving IFAD's and its partners' performance in supporting rural transformation in developing Member countries.

IOE’s evaluations assess the impact of IFAD-funded activities and give an analysis of successes and shortcomings – to tell it the way it is – as well as identify factors affecting performance.

Based on the key insights and recommendations drawn from evaluation findings, IOE also communicates and shares IFAD’s knowledge and experience in agriculture and rural development with a wider audience.

In 2013, IFAD observed ten years of independent evaluation. It is since 2003, when the first Evaluation Policy was approved by IFAD’s Executive Board, that IOE is fully independent from the Management and reports to the IFAD Executive Board.

IOE is a member of the Evaluation Cooperation Group (ECG) of the multilateral development banks. ECG was established by the heads of evaluation of multilateral development banks and is dedicated to harmonizing evaluation work among its members. IOE is the only evaluation office among the United Nations specialized agencies, programmes or funds to be a member of ECG.

IOE is a member of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG). UNEG is a professional network that brings together the units responsible for evaluation in the United Nations system.
Recent evaluations*

2014 Annual Report on Results and Impact of IFAD Operations
The report reveals that the performance of IFAD-financed operations is satisfactory in several evaluation criteria, such as rural poverty impact, gender equality and women’s empowerment, and innovation and scaling up. IFAD’s performance as a partner is the best it has been since the ARRRI was first produced in 2003.

Benchmarking analysis concludes that performance of IFAD-supported projects is on par with or better than the agriculture operations of selected multilateral development organizations. There are areas that remain a challenge. These include the sustainability of benefits, operational efficiency, and the performance of governments as partners. This year’s learning theme covers the issue of project management. The report underlines that good project management is essential for positive outcomes.

Corporate-level evaluation: IFAD Policy for Grant Financing
The evaluation found that grants can be an invaluable tool for IFAD to promote its agenda of rural poverty alleviation. Grants have allowed IFAD to collaborate with a wide range of organizations, such as farmers’ organizations, civil society and indigenous peoples’ organizations, and international agricultural research institutions.

However, the relevance of the policy has been limited by lack of clarity and prioritization. Overall, the effectiveness of the policy has been moderately unsatisfactory, although there are signs of improvement since 2010.

People’s Republic of China: Country programme evaluation
This is the first country programme evaluation conducted by IOE in China. It covers the partnership between IFAD and the Government from 1999 to 2013. The evaluation concluded that the China-IFAD partnership is strong and the aggregate performance of the loan portfolio, non-lending activities (i.e. policy dialogue, knowledge management and partnership-building) and country strategic opportunities programmes was satisfactory.

However, the main challenge in the future partnership is to increase the emphasis on non-lending activities, which will need to be linked to an adequate investment project portfolio that focuses on promoting innovation and scaling up.

Republic of The Sudan Gash Sustainable Livelihoods Regeneration Project
The project made an important contribution in terms of setting a reform process in motion and supporting institution-strengthening, notably the introduction of irrigation management transfer to newly formed water users’ associations and land tenure reform. The project helped improve access to safe water for rural households and it made contribution to empowering women in a highly conservative society.

Despite important steps taken and contributions made, the overall achievements fell short of the set objectives. The design underestimated the complexities of the social, political and institutional contexts. Opportunities arising from irrigation infrastructure rehabilitation were not adequately exploited to generate expected results at farm level. The sustainability of the Gash spate irrigation scheme is a matter of concern.

Evaluation synthesis: IFAD’s engagement in middle-income countries
The evaluation synthesis concluded that IFAD remains a relevant and highly valued partner for middle-income countries, where there is an extensive demand for the Fund’s assistance given its specialization and comparative advantage in working in remote rural areas and inclusive growth.

However, taking into account the heterogeneity of these countries, there are opportunities for IFAD to further sharpen some of its existing products and instruments, devoting greater attention to non-lending activities, technical assistance, and South-South and Triangular Cooperation. In addition, IFAD should intensify its ongoing efforts to mobilize additional funding from alternative sources and to strengthen strategic partnerships with other bilateral and multilateral organizations.

Evaluation insight
Our independent evaluations help IFAD enhance its development effectiveness as well as disseminate knowledge to partners and the development community.

Annual Report on Results and Impact of IFAD Operations (ARRRI)
This is our flagship annual report. It presents a consolidated picture on results and impact achievement, and a summary of cross-cutting issues and lessons on the basis of evaluations conducted by IOE. Each edition also includes a dedicated section on one learning theme. For instance, the 2014 ARRRI deals with project management. IOE has been tracking the evolution of performance and impact of IFAD-assisted operations since 2003 and has accumulated an important amount of evaluative evidence and information for larger-scale analysis.

Corporate-level evaluations
Corporate-level evaluations assess the results of IFAD-wide corporate policies, strategies, business processes or related organizational aspects. They generate findings and recommendations that can be used for the formulation of more effective corporate policies and strategies, or to improve business processes and organizational architecture.

Country programme evaluations
Country programme evaluations assess the performance and impact of IFAD-funded operations in a given country and generate findings and recommendations to serve as building blocks for the preparation of a new IFAD country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP) in the same country. These evaluations cover three inter-related components: (i) the performance and impact of programmes and projects supported by IFAD; (ii) the non-lending activities (policy dialogue, partnership-building, and knowledge management); and (iii) the COSOP performance, in terms of relevance and effectiveness. The assessment also generates an overall appreciation of the partnership between IFAD and the concerned government in reducing rural poverty.

Evaluation syntheses
IOE produces evaluation syntheses on selected topics, such as gender, middle-income countries and rural youth. The aim is to facilitate learning and wider use of evaluation findings by identifying and capturing accumulated knowledge on common themes and findings across a variety of situations. Synthesizing existing evaluation material together with latest research thinking allows evaluation evidence to be fed into the decision-making process in an effective way.

Project evaluations
Project evaluations consist of project completion report validations – independent desk reviews of project completion reports – and project performance assessments – which assess project results and impact based on the report validation and a field mission. Project performance assessments generate findings and recommendations that can inform other projects funded by IFAD.

Impact evaluations
IOE introduced impact evaluations as a new product in 2013. These are project-level evaluations that assess results and impact and generate relevant findings and recommendations for the design and implementation of ongoing and future operations in a given country. The evaluation is based on mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative) based on primary data collection and use of statistical techniques for impact analysis.

Evaluation profiles
Profiles are two-page summaries of the main conclusions and recommendations arising from IOE evaluations.

Evaluation insights
Insights focus on one learning issue emerging from evaluations, with the aim of generating further debate among development practitioners.
Our evaluation approach

Our evaluation approach reflects and is harmonized with internationally accepted evaluation norms and principles – from the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the Evaluation Cooperation Group of the multilateral development banks and the United Nations Evaluation Group.

Evaluation methods and processes are documented in the Evaluation Manual issued in 2009. The Manual aims to ensure consistency, rigour and transparency across independent evaluations with the view to enhance our effectiveness and the quality of our work.

The Evaluation Manual is available in Arabic, English, French and Spanish to facilitate its use in all geographic regions covered by IFAD operations.

Our evaluation approach

Our evaluation approach reflects and is harmonized with internationally accepted evaluation norms and principles – from the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the Evaluation Cooperation Group of the multilateral development banks and the United Nations Evaluation Group.

Evaluation methods and processes are documented in the Evaluation Manual issued in 2009. The Manual aims to ensure consistency, rigour and transparency across independent evaluations with the view to enhance our effectiveness and the quality of our work.

The Evaluation Manual is available in Arabic, English, French and Spanish to facilitate its use in all geographic regions covered by IFAD operations.


Evaluation policy

The Evaluation Policy states the fundamental principles and operational policies of independence, accountability, partnership, and learning for evaluation work at IFAD. The first Evaluation Policy was adopted by the Board in 2003 and then later revised in 2011.

The evaluation function is thus separate from IFAD Management and IOE reports directly to the Executive Board. The Executive Board oversees IFAD’s evaluation work and assesses the overall quality and impact of IFAD’s operations as documented in evaluation reports. The Board is assisted by the Evaluation Committee. All evaluation reports are disclosed to the public.

IOE builds constructive partnerships around evaluations and engages partners throughout the evaluation processes so as to generate relevant recommendations and ensure their ownership. For each country programme evaluation, an agreement at completion point is signed between IFAD Management and the concerned government on their commitment to adopt and implement evaluation recommendations within specific timeframes.

IOE establishes feedback loops from evaluation to policy makers, operational staff and the general public through in-country and in-house workshops, short communication products, evaluation syntheses and the review of new IFAD policies and strategies.

Evaluation Committee

The Evaluation Committee is a sub-committee of the Executive Board which performs in-depth reviews of selected evaluation reports and IOE’s annual work programme and budget. The Committee meets formally four times a year and may also hold informal meetings when required.

The Evaluation Committee is currently composed of the following Member States: Angola, Finland, France, India, Indonesia (Chair), Mexico, Netherlands, Nigeria and Norway.
Our evaluation work

Our independent evaluations help IFAD enhance its development effectiveness as well as disseminate knowledge to partners and the development community.

Annual Report on Results and Impact of IFAD Operations (ARRI)

This is our flagship annual report. It presents a consolidated picture on results and impact achievement, and a summary of cross-cutting issues and lessons on the basis of evaluations conducted by IOE. Each edition also includes a dedicated section on one learning theme. For instance, the 2014 ARRI deals with project management, IOE has been tracking the evolution of performance and impact of IFAD-assisted operations since 2003 and has accumulated an important amount of evaluative evidence and information for larger-scale analysis.

Corporate-level evaluations

Corporate-level evaluations assess the results of IFAD-wide corporate policies, strategies, business processes or related organizational aspects. They generate findings and recommendations that can be used for the formulation of more effective corporate policies and strategies, or to improve business processes and organizational architecture.

Recent evaluations

2014 Annual Report on Results and Impact of IFAD Operations

The report reveals that the performance of IFAD-financed operations is satisfactory in several evaluation criteria, such as rural poverty impact, gender equality and women’s empowerment, and innovation and scaling up. IFAD’s performance as a partner is the best it has been since the ARRI was first produced in 2003.

Benchmarking analysis concludes that performance of IFAD-supported projects is on par with or better than the agriculture operations of selected multilateral development organizations. There are areas that remain a challenge. These include the sustainability of benefits, operational efficiency, and the performance of governments as partners.

People’s Republic of China: Country programme evaluation

The evaluation synthesis concluded that IFAD remains a relevant and highly valued partner for middle-income countries, where there is an extensive demand for the Fund’s assistance given its specialization and comparative advantage in working in remote rural areas and inclusive growth. However, the main challenge in the future partnership is to increase the emphasis on non-lending activities, which will need to be linked to an adequate investment project portfolio that focuses on promoting innovation and scaling up.

Republic of The Sudan Gash Sustainable Livelihoods Regeneration Project

The project made an important contribution in terms of setting a reform process in motion and supporting institution-strengthening, notably the introduction of irrigation management transfer to newly formed water users’ associations and land tenure reform. The project helped improve access to safe water for rural households and it made contribution to empowering women in a highly conservative society.

Evaluation syntheses

IOE produces evaluation syntheses on selected topics, such as gender, middle-income countries and rural youth. The aim is to facilitate learning and wider use of evaluation findings by identifying and capturing accumulated knowledge on common themes and findings across a variety of situations. Synthesizing existing evaluation material together with latest research thinking allows evaluation evidence to be fed into the decision-making process in an effective way.

Country programme evaluations

Country programme evaluations assess the performance and impact of IFAD-funded operations in a given country and generate findings and recommendations to serve as building blocks for the preparation of a new IFAD country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP) in the same country. These evaluations cover three inter-related components: (i) the performance and impact of programmes and projects supported by IFAD; (ii) the non-lending activities (policy dialogue, partnership-building, and knowledge management); and (iii) the COSOP performance, in terms of relevance and effectiveness. The assessment also generates an overall appreciation of the partnership between IFAD and the concerned government in reducing rural poverty.

Impact evaluations

IOE introduced impact evaluations as a new product in 2013. These are project-level evaluations that assess results and impact and generate relevant findings and recommendations for the design and implementation of ongoing and future operations in a given country. The evaluation is based on mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative) based on primary data collection and use of statistical techniques for impact analysis.

Evaluation profiles

Profiles are two-page summaries of the main conclusions and recommendations arising from IOE evaluations.

Evaluation insights

Insights focus on one learning issue emerging from evaluations, with the aim of generating further debate among development practitioners.

* All IOE evaluation products are available at www.ifad.org/evaluation
Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD

The Independent Office of Evaluation (IOE) conducts evaluations of IFAD-financed policies, strategies and operations to promote accountability and learning. The main purpose is to contribute to improving IFAD's and its partners’ performance in supporting rural transformation in developing Member countries.

IOE's evaluations assess the impact of IFAD-funded activities and give an analysis of successes and shortcomings – to tell it the way it is – as well as identify factors affecting performance.

Based on the key insights and recommendations drawn from evaluation findings, IOE also communicates and shares IFAD’s knowledge and experience in agriculture and rural development with a wider audience.

In 2013, IFAD observed ten years of independent evaluation. It is since 2003, when the first Evaluation Policy was approved by IFAD’s Executive Board, that IOE is fully independent from the Management and reports to the IFAD Executive Board.

IOE is a member of the Evaluation Cooperation Group (ECG) of the multilateral development banks. ECG was established by the heads of evaluation of multilateral development banks and is dedicated to harmonizing evaluation work among its members. IOE is the only evaluation office among the United Nations specialized agencies, programmes or funds to be a member of ECG.

IOE is a member of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG). UNEG is a professional network that brings together the units responsible for evaluation in the United Nations system.

Forthcoming reports

2015 Annual Report on Results and Impact of IFAD Operations

Corporate-level evaluations
IFAD’s work in fragile and conflict-affected states and situations
IFAD’s Performance-based Allocation System

Country programme evaluations
Bangladesh Brazil Ethiopia India Nigeria The Gambia Turkey
Tanzania (United Republic of)

Evaluation syntheses
IFAD’s engagement with indigenous peoples
IFAD’s engagement in pastoral development (jointly with the Office of Evaluation of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations)

Impact evaluation
India: Jharkhand-Chhattisgarh Tribal Development Project

Project performance assessments
Albania: Programme for Sustainable Development in Rural Mountain Areas
Brazils: Rural Communities Development Project in the Poorest Areas of the State of Bahia
China: Environment Conservation and Poverty-Reduction Programme in Ningxia and Shanxi
Djibouti: Microfinance and Microenterprise Development Project
Ethiopia: Pastoral Community Development Project II
India: Livelihoods Improvement Project in the Himalayas
Kyrgyzstan: Agricultural Investments and Services Project
Nigeria: Community-Based Agricultural and Rural Development Programme
Pakistan: Community Development Programme
Rwanda: Support Project for the Strategic Plan for the Transformation of Agriculture
Turkey: Sivas-Erzincan Development Project