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International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) Evaluation Manual - Second Edition (2015)

The second edition of the Evaluation Manual takes into account IFAD's new strategic priorities and operating model – which have clear implications for evaluation methods and processes – and adopts more rigorous methodological approaches, for example by promoting better impact assessment techniques and the use of theories of change. The Manual contains the core methodology that the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) uses to conduct its evaluations. It has been developed upon the principles set out in the IFAD Evaluation Policy, drawing from IOE's experience in implementing the first edition, building on international good evaluation standards and practice, and incorporates new international evaluative trends.

Purpose

The Evaluation Manual's primary function is to guide staff and consultants engaged in evaluation work at IFAD, providing methodological fundamentals and references. The Manual is also useful to systematize good practices in evaluation, shortening the learning curve for new staff, and making the evaluation process more efficient by helping evaluators focus on what is important. Building on international good evaluation standards and practice and being rooted in IFAD's strategic priorities, the manual makes evaluations more comparable, allowing evaluators to consolidate findings and recommendations.

The Manual also serves as a reference document for other IFAD staff and development partners, such as project management staff and executing agencies of IFAD-supported operations, especially in recipient countries, on how evaluation of development programmes in the agriculture and rural development sector is conducted in IFAD. It also serves as a basis for harmonizing evaluations conducted by IOE and those carried out by IFAD Management, to ensure that the Fund's independent and self-evaluation systems are aligned.

Methodological fundamentals

The Manual includes a wider discussion on key methodological fundamentals for independent evaluations (e.g. the use of theory of change approach, new techniques for data collection and analysis, and participation of beneficiaries and key stakeholders in

evaluation processes), and more thorough attention to communication and outreach of results and lessons learned. It also includes a set of enhanced evaluation questions to assess performance across each criterion, and introduces dedicated criteria for systematically assessing adaptation to climate change and environmental and natural resource management in line with the priorities of the Tenth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources.

The Manual explores: (i) techniques and instruments for data collection; (ii) the analysis and interpretation of data; (iii) benchmarking, which allows the performance of IFAD to be compared with that of other development organizations; (iv) evaluation questions and the issue of inter-evaluator variability; and (v) the development of theories of change, which articulate how activities are linked to outcome and impact, clearly outlining assumptions and contextual factors of an intervention, a policy or strategy.

Evaluation criteria and ratings

Key components of IFAD's evaluation architecture are the evaluation criteria to assess the performance of IFAD policies, strategies, operations and business processes. Evaluation criteria applied in IOE evaluations ensure the harmonization of IFAD's evaluation methodology across international development organizations.

Evaluation criteria used by IOE

Rural poverty impact, with four impact domains

Household income and assets
Human and social capital and empowerment
Food security and agricultural productivity
Institutions and policies

Project performance

Relevance
Effectiveness
Efficiency
Sustainability of benefits

Other performance criteria

Gender equality and women's empowerment
Innovation and scaling up
Environment and natural resources management
Adaptation to climate change

Overall project achievement

Performance of partners

IFAD
Government

To help conduct performance assessments and ensure consistency in the foundation for ratings, IOE uses a number of key questions for each evaluation criterion. These key questions have been carefully crafted, based on the internationally recognized definition of each evaluation criterion. In addition to core questions, evaluators may also introduce other questions for each criterion – to ensure a comprehensive assessment of the intervention being evaluated.

A rating is assigned to each evaluation criterion on a scale of 1 to 6, as follows: 6 – Highly satisfactory, 5 – Satisfactory, 4 – Moderately satisfactory, 3 – Moderately unsatisfactory, 2 – Unsatisfactory, 1 – Highly unsatisfactory.

Evaluation products

Compared to the first edition released in 2009, this second edition contains the core methodology for evaluations that were not previously contemplated, such as project completion report validations, corporate-level evaluations, impact evaluations and evaluation synthesis reports. It also includes updated methodologies for already-existing products, such as project performance evaluations (formerly project performance assessments) and country strategy and programme evaluations (formerly country programme evaluations).

IOE conducts the following types of evaluations:

- **Annual Report on Results and Impact of IFAD Operations (ARRI).** This report aims to provide an integrated perspective across all types of evaluations. It gives a consolidated picture on results and impact of IFAD activities, discusses lessons learned, and draws attention to related systemic issues with a view to further enhance IFAD's development effectiveness. Each edition includes a dedicated section on one learning theme. For instance, the 2015 ARRI deals with sustainability of benefits.
- **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 to formulate more effective corporate policies and strategies, or to improve business processes and IFAD's organizational architecture.
- **Country strategy and programme evaluations.** These 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 results-based country strategic opportunities programme (RB-COSOP). They cover three inter-related components: (i) the performance and impact of programmes and projects that IFAD supports; (ii) the non-lending activities (policy dialogue,

partnership-building, knowledge management, and also grants) and (iii) 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 synthesis reports** aim to facilitate learning and wider use of evaluation findings by identifying and capturing accumulated knowledge on common themes and findings across a variety of evaluation reports and topics such as gender, indigenous peoples and middle-income countries.
- **Impact evaluations** are project-level evaluations intended to assess the performance and impact of an IFAD-funded project in a more quantitative and rigorous manner and provide recommendations for future operations. They apply mixed methods and triangulate from different sources. Compared to other IOE evaluations, they benefit from a larger set of primary data collected through a qualitative and quantitative survey.
- **Project evaluations** assess project results and impact based on the completion report validation and a field mission. Project performance evaluations generate findings and recommendations that can inform other projects that IFAD supports.
- **Project completion report validations** are independent desk reviews of project completion reports which contain an assessment of the results and impact of an IFAD-financed project or programme and include ratings for each evaluation criterion covered in the validation.

Communication, dissemination and learning

IOE's evaluation approach aims to transform each evaluation into a systematic and operations-oriented learning exercise, emphasizing the need for evaluations to finish not merely with a publication, but with an understanding among the evaluation's partners to adopt specific findings and recommendations. Feedback activities and dissemination are integral parts of the evaluation process, as any IOE product is disclosed to the public and disseminated widely. To this end, IOE uses several communication and outreach tools to share evaluation learning, developing targeted communication strategies and plans.

The Evaluation Manual is available in Arabic, English, French and Spanish to facilitate its use in all regions where IFAD operates. It can be downloaded from the IFAD website:

www.ifad.org/en/evaluation/policy_and_methodology/tags/5702569

Further information:

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